

# **Against the** Current

Fall, 1983  
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a socialist quarterly magazine

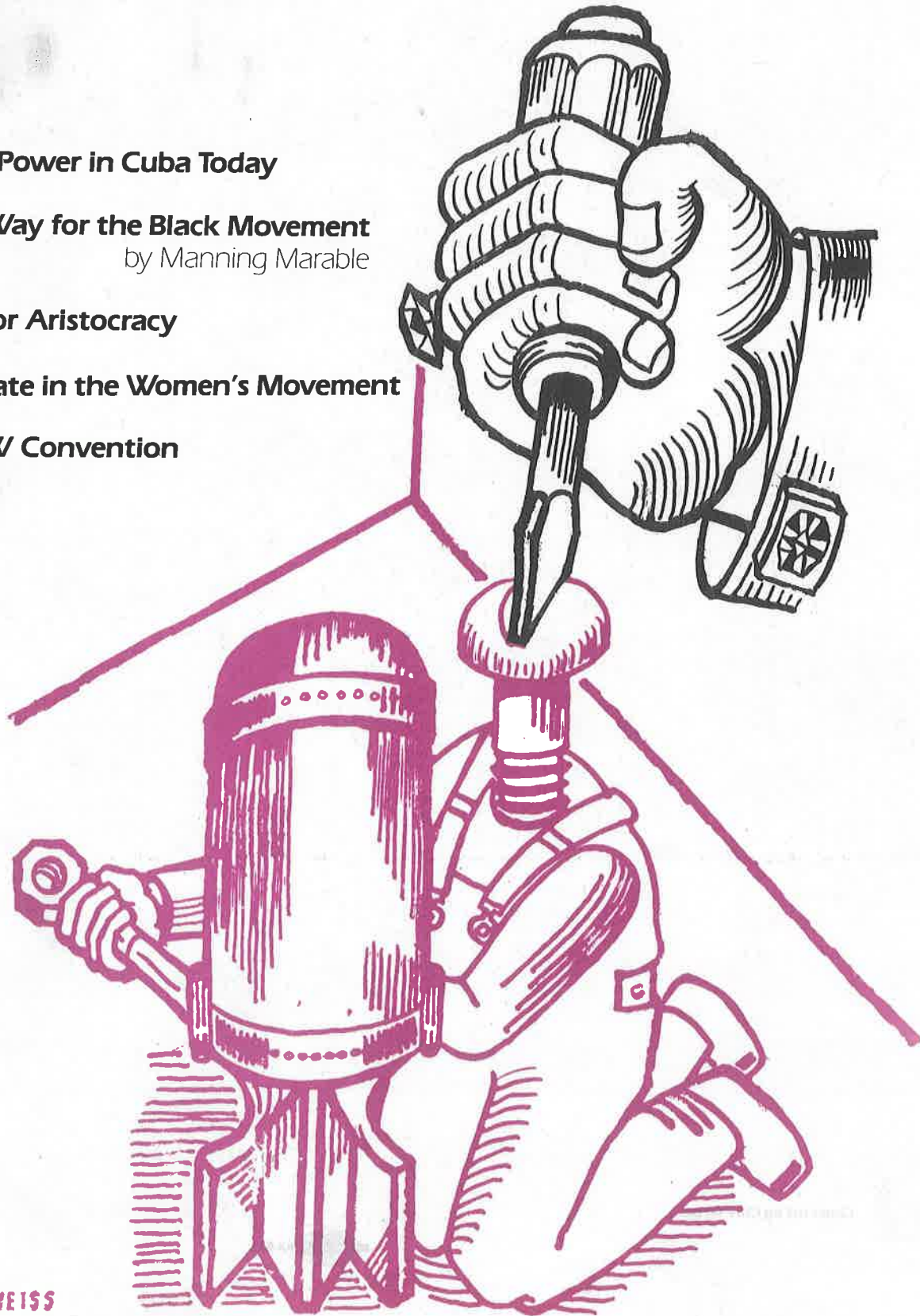
**Popular Power in Cuba Today**

**Which Way for the Black Movement**  
by Manning Marable

**The Labor Aristocracy**

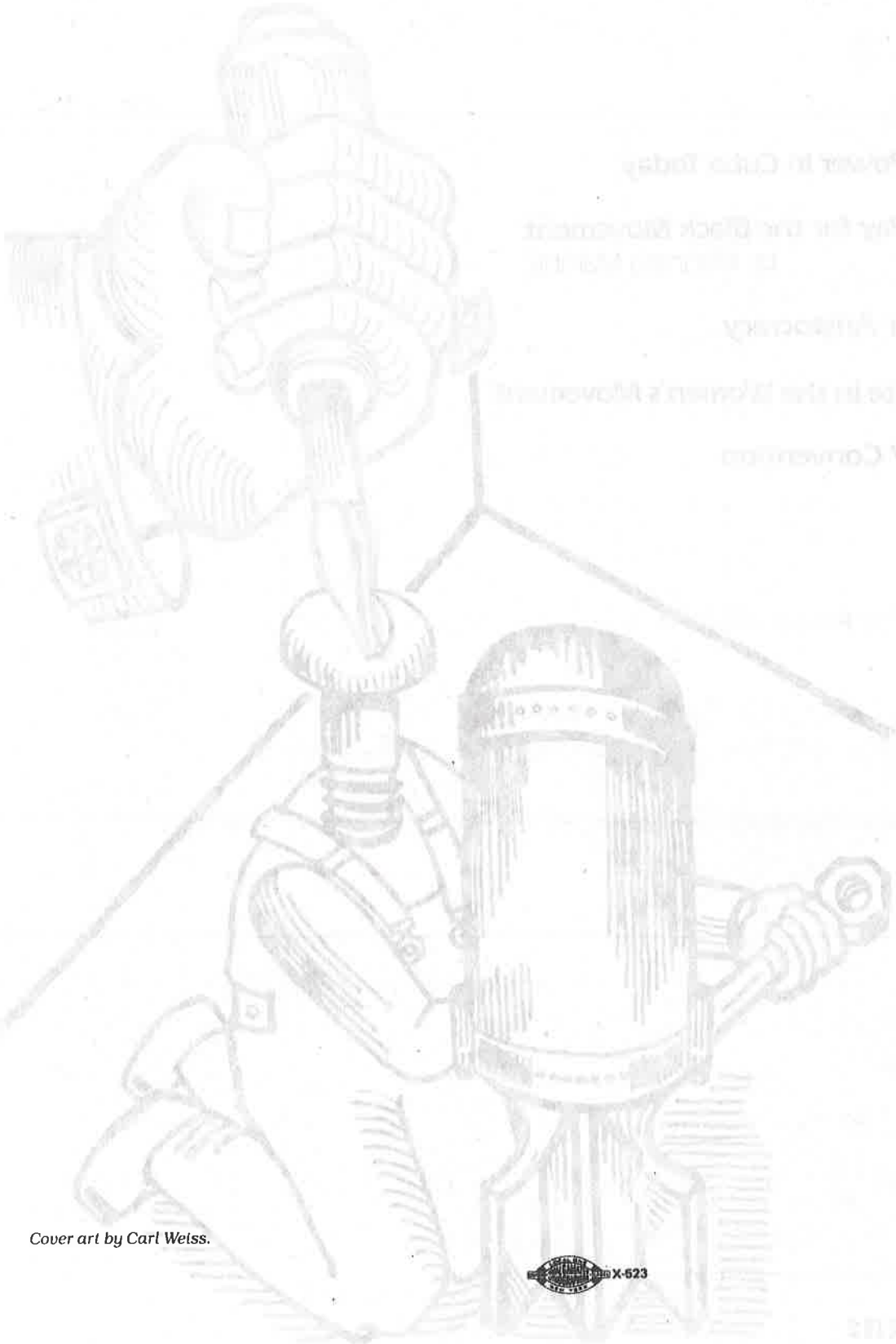
**Sex Debate in the Women's Movement**

**The UAW Convention**



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# Comment



Popular Power in Cuba today  
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The LAW Connection

Cover art by Carl Weiss.



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a socialist quarterly magazine sponsored by Workers Power

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# TELEPHONE STRIKE: New Strategies Needed

by the Editors

The recent telephone strike was a defeat (in the minds of the membership). They got a 7.5% wage increase *over three years*, plus some COLA. Little Else.

The source of the defeat transcends the union leadership's admitted unreadiness for the strike and fear of it. Equally central is the unions' dramatically reduced capacity to use the strike weapon effectively. This arises from the intense computerization of jobs and the increased weight of supervisors in the work force. These two new elements have meant that strikes are less effective now in heavily computerized or automated industries such as petroleum, utilities, and communications. The fate of two recent strikes rested upon this awareness: the nation-wide telephone strike and the two-month-long strike at NYC's Con Ed (which was similarly defeated). The phone workers were aided this time around by the fact that this was the first strike in which all three phone unions were out, and, by the fact that AT&T is in the process of splitting up. Nevertheless, the fact that none of these strikes were able to shut down the operations represented a serious weakness. The weakness was particularly grave for the phone workers since the negotiations were likely to be the last *national* negotiations, and since the key issue was one of job security.

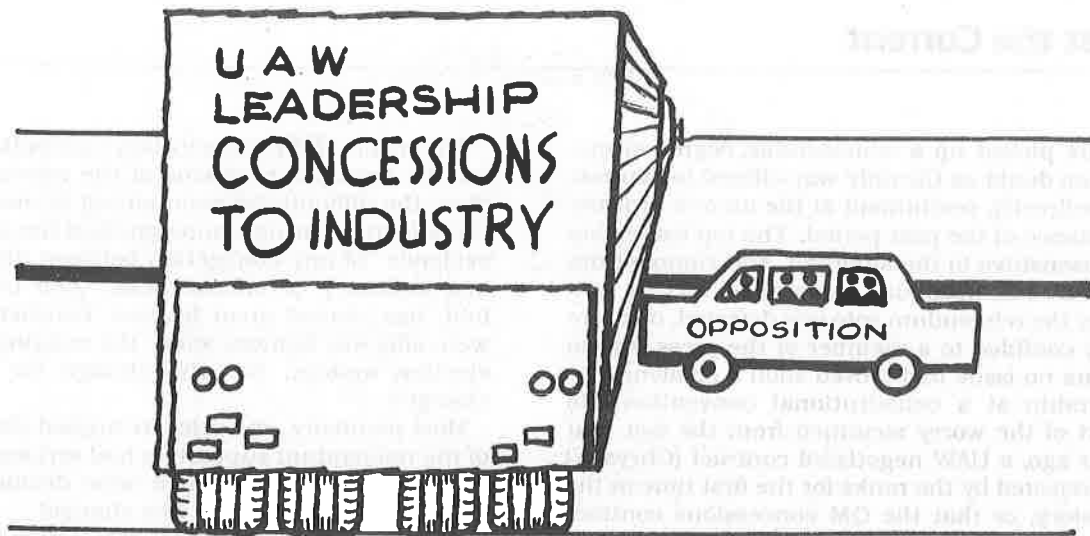
Clearly new strategies have to be explored if the unions in these industries are not to be reduced to shadows. Two, not-so-new but long-unused strategies from labor's own better days come to mind. No doubt many more will emerge once workers face up to the limitations of old methods.

1. The most powerful weapon available to the ranks at this time was one actually used by the Canadian telephone workers in 1981. They staged sit-ins and occupied the plants. In the U.S., this could even have been done in just a few central selective cases, while tens of thousands of supporters defended the seizure from the outside.

After expelling the scabs and supervisors, the choice would then have been to either shut down the system or, perhaps preferably, to keep the phones in operation, but "make them free."

2. Should this have proved impossible, or impossible *at this stage* of the movement, a second strategy would have been to prevent delivery of raw materials or supplies to the struck facilities by other union members. (In the case of ConEd, this would have meant preventing the delivery of coal. That would have required mass pickets at railroad depots and massive other efforts to win the aid of the trainmen and their local unions.)

It goes without saying that ideally, it would be the AFL-CIO leadership which should have organized this support (and they should have been asked to do so). In fact such support was not likely to materialize. But substantial support could have arisen if the strikers' actions, determination and dynamism caught the imagination of the ranks and secondary leaders of other unions. That is how the 1978 coal strike was able to win the important active outside support ■



## OPPOSITION AT THE UAW CONVENTION\*

**T**he recent UAW convention took place against a background of four years of "concession" bargaining in the union. During these four years, opposition groups developed in many locals around the country. While most of these oppositions grew as part of an anti-concessions movement, many also developed deeper philosophical differences with the international leadership of the union, differences which came to a head in the fight against concessions. But it is not just concessions. There was the new contractual provision making it possible and in effect encouraging separate locals of the same corporation to compete with and underbid other UAW locals within the corporation. There was also the acceleration of Quality Circles programs throughout the industry (with the enthusiastic support of the union leadership).

By the time the convention came around it was pretty clear that the top leadership's concession strategy to save jobs had failed. Layoffs due to loss of paid personal holidays immediately followed contract ratification at many localities. GM loaned \$200,000,000 to Isuzu to make it possible for the Japanese Corporation to develop an R-car to replace GM's Chevette. Contrary to the leadership's claims, job losses due to outsourcing of parts (subcontracting to non-GM plants, often at less than GM wages) increased, and of course the tide of new job-eliminating technology flowed with greater vigor.

### Alternatives

Despite the fact that opposition to the policies of the UAW leadership had grown and had resulted in the election of many oppositionists to secondary leadership and as convention delegates, no *international* opposition organization had coalesced in the pre-convention period. There was the fear among activists that an actual organization would make the infant anti-concessions movement too easy a target for leadership reprisals. Others feared that identification with long-time UAW oppositionists would result in loss of credibility for those secondary leaders who were showing signs of breaking to one point or another with the international leadership. Still others looked to the more militant Canadian region of the UAW which comprises around 10% of the membership, for leadership of an international opposition. (It did not materialize.)

\*The writer was a delegate to the UAW convention.

The closest thing to the development of an international opposition had been LOC (Locals Opposed to Concessions). Its role was one of disseminating information and providing a critique of the Ford and GM concessions contracts of 1982. But after the contract fights were over the leadership of LOC resisted any kind of international formation whatsoever even in the form of a modest international newsletter. LOC ultimately folded and was officially disbanded at the Dallas UAW convention.

As a result, there was no focus to channel the substantial dissatisfaction that had emerged. Faced with the convention, the vacuum was filled by an initiative from the leadership of the 8,000-member AMC Local 72, from Kenosha Wisconsin. However limited, as we shall see, this was the only organized, articulated expression of opposition at the convention.

Months before the convention, Local 72 had passed a resolution calling for the election of the UAW leadership by direct rank and file (referendum) vote (as is done in the steel and coal unions). On its own, Local 72 addressed other UAW activists urging them to submit similar resolutions to their locals. Over 37 locals did so. A substantial minority of delegates ultimately were elected on the referendum vote issue. Even some locals that didn't pass the referendum vote resolution elected some of their delegates wholly or in part on this issue. Much of the rank and file discontent that had emerged over the last four years on the concessions issue was channeled (more precisely, diverted, as we shall see) into the referendum vote issue.

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The issue picked up a considerable degree of momentum, no doubt as the only way offered to express, however indirectly, resentment at the union's pro-concessions stance of the past period. The top leadership was not insensitive to the situation, and rumors from the UAW's Detroit headquarters revealed serious concern. (After the referendum vote was defeated, one central leader confided to a member of the press that in recent years no issue had proved such a challenge for the leadership at a constitutional convention. No doubt part of the worry stemmed from the fact that just a year ago, a UAW negotiated contract (Chrysler) had been rejected by the ranks for the first time in the UAW's history, or that the GM concessions contract had been opposed by fully 47% of the membership!)

### A Missed Opportunity

At the convention, the main arguments put forward by proponents of the referendum vote were that it would make the UAW a *more* democratic union. This would occur through the increased discussion among the ranks during an election, and because candidates would have a chance to debate their case before the members instead of behind the closed doors of the International Executive Board.

But, regrettably, what referendum supporters did not do was link the referendum issue to the economic and political issues facing the union. On the contrary, the referendum supporters made it clear that "Those of us . . . who advance the direct election by membership vote of International officers and Regional Directors do not come to the 27th Constitutional Convention to castigate any of those who seek office this week" (primarily administration backed candidates). The closest they allowed themselves to get to an expression of their *underlying* programmatic issues was their statement that "The UAW is at a crossroads. The retirement of Brother Fraser marks the end of the Reuther era and the beginning of a new era for the UAW . . . our future leadership will not be drawn from the UAW's origins." Thus, for the sake of diplomacy, the need for the referendum vote was reduced to a purely democratic question and not tied to any of the more political *causes* of the growing disenchantment with the International that has been developing—a disenchantment which really sparked the referendum.

The leadership response was two-fold—the carrot and the stick. Organizationally, it outmaneuvered the referendum supporters and coerced many delegates, some of whom were elected on platforms supporting the referendum vote, into changing their positions.

Politically, the UAW leadership took cognizance of the pro-referendum forces, silence about the underlying issues. No doubt they were relieved and even thankful). Thus, the report of the official Convention Constitution Committee stated:

"It was obvious to us [the committee] that these proposals came from committed unionists, who care deeply about our union. We believe that, for the most part, they were offered in a constructive spirit by people who sincerely believe in a referendum process. . . . [But] we should understand that the issue before us does not pit a democratic system against an undemocratic system. Both procedures for electing officers are democratic. Rather, the question before us is which system combines democracy with maximum effectiveness."

The report of the Constitution Committee went on to list the logistical problems of the referendum procedure, the difficulty of maintaining fairness and financial integrity during campaigns and the alleged lack of evidence "of any connection between direct elections and militancy or effectiveness." The UAW, we were told, has elected great leaders, Reuther, et al., who were effective fighters under the existing convention-election system. So why change for the sake of change?

Most pointedly, one delegate argued that since none of the referendum supporters had serious criticisms of the leaders' policies, which were decided on by the convention system, then why change!

That indeed was the \$64,000 question. For the referendum supporters for the most part *did* have political objections to the top leadership's program and practice. They opposed its concessions policies and non-adversarial partnership relations with the corporations. They resented Fraser's *covering up* of numerous manifestations of corporate greed, such as increased salaries for officers, continued outsourcing, unbridled robotization, run-away shop, etc. though such practices are often exposed by the ranks. But all this was kept below the surface, in isolation from the question of democracy.

### What Next?

Following a long sometimes harsh and explosive debate the report of the Constitution Committee was approved by better than 10 to 1.

The question remains—could the referendum vote have passed even if the related underlying economic and political issues had been joined? Probably not. The International leadership still has a firm grip on the reins. And the lack, for a variety of reasons, of a national organized opposition makes it difficult to carry out any national campaign or provide an alternative coherent militant pole of attraction within the UAW. While AMC local 72's effort cannot be diminished, the fact that the burden of formulating and coordinating a referendum vote fight was borne organizationally and politically solely by one local impeded the referendum campaign.

Was the referendum effort worth making? Probably yes. Even though showing the organic connection between greater union democracy and the other issues facing the union would have made for a clearer debate, on a higher level, and one more meaningful to the ranks. Indeed, it is doubtful if a campaign for union democracy will really catch fire, especially in a union like the UAW, unless it is linked to a fight against the corporations. It is precisely this kind of fight which events in the union and the economy suggest may be in the offing once again. In any case, the credibility of an opposition which has led *such a fight*, for democracy and for a fightback against the corporations, would have been substantially enhanced.

After the convention, an opposition instrument was created, R.A.M. (Restore and More). It remains to be seen if it will be more effective, organizationally and politically, than such formations in the past. ■

# WHAT MITTERAND MEANS TO THE U.S. LEFT

by the Editors

**S**lightly more than two years ago, François Mitterand and his Socialist Party won a landslide victory in the French elections, exciting great expectations among broad elements on the left, both in Europe and here in the United States. Shortly after taking office in June 1981, the new Socialist government raised the minimum wage, increased family and housing allocations by 25%, upped allowances for the elderly and the handicapped by 20%, and created 50,000 public jobs. Meanwhile, the government instituted a broad Keynesian policy, aimed at using deficit spending to raise output and employment. A few months later, the government cut the work week to 39 hours. Most spectacularly, in the fall of 1981, the Socialists initiated a broad program of nationalization, which eventually brought under state ownership not only the whole banking sector, but a broad range of giant companies at the very heart of the advanced industrial economy—in electronics, armaments, computers, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, data processing, etc. To some, it appeared that a piecemeal transition to socialism was indeed under way.

Four months after coming to power, however, Mitterand was obliged to carry out his first devaluation of the currency. It was a sign of things to come. Already by March 1982, the government announced that it was drawing back from its Keynesian policies of deficit spending. Immediately thereafter, the Socialists reduced social security payments and pledged that there would be no further reductions in the work week. In June 1982, the franc was devalued for the second time. Simultaneously, the government imposed wage and price controls and began an assault on the escalator clauses that had kept workers' wages up with inflation. Today the socialist government is implementing a full-scale austerity program. During 1983, wages will be allowed to grow less than prices. Social services are being sharply reduced. Monetary stimulation of the economy is being cut way back. As Socialist finance minister Jacques Delors explains: "We want... to curb consumer purchasing power and increase profitability." In a recent unofficial interview, Mitterand confessed to two major mistakes. He should have devalued the franc immediately and have begun the austerity at least a year earlier. So much for serious reformism, let alone the transition to socialism.

The socialist experiment in France warrants the closest examination by the American left. Many socialists in the US, including large numbers of former new leftists of the 1960s, have cast off their youthful infatuation with revolutionism to embrace the more sober, and ostensibly more realistic, social democratic road. *Socialist Revolution* has become *Socialist Review*, and erstwhile supporters of the revolutionary party and the rank and file movement have begun the "long march through the institutions"—religiously attending COPE meetings, mastering the higher analytics of electoral strategy, counselling left-wing union officials in radical economics, and trying to build the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). For these leftists, and many others, the Mitterand electoral victory had to assume a special significance, for it represented the fulfillment of their own strategy to an extent still quite inconceivable in the US.

## A Dream Come True?

By almost every important criterion, Mitterand's Socialist Party actually had achieved the far-off goals of the fledgling reformist socialists in the United States. First, unlike the Democratic Party, the Socialist Party

was based entirely on *non-capitalist* social layers. Secondly, the Socialist Party *defined itself* as "socialist, not social democrat." It was apparently "committed to a gradual, but definitive 'break with capitalism.'" Thirdly, the French Socialist Party had amassed a great deal of political power in the state. The socialists had won an enormous electoral victory, with the great mass of its working class supporters clearly rejecting the austerity program of the previous Gaullist government. Finally, the Socialist government was committed to an unusually radical program. They promised to nationalize the advanced industrial sectors so as to allow for socialist planning. They called for a new system of labor relations, which would make possible a greater degree of union recognition and the increased strength of the workers on the shop floor. Finally, there was a vague, but widely-touted commitment to "workers control." Surely, if the reform socialist perspective now being embraced by many American leftists is at all viable, Mitterand's government should have provided some positive evidence in its favor.

## Awakening to a Nightmare

Why, then, has the Mitterand government turned out like so many other capitalist governments? Briefly, it is because the entire reform socialist perspective is, and always has been, faulty. The idea that *any* government, socialist or otherwise, can *expect* to make serious and lasting reforms in a period of profound capitalist crisis, *without the massive mobilization of the working class* outside the halls of Parliament remains as utopian as ever. On the other hand, reforms backed up by workers' direct action which cut into capitalist profits are bound to incite intense resistance on the part of capital leading to sharpening class struggles and a deepening crisis of production. *For this reason alone, it is only practical* for any seriously pro-working class government to be prepared for the socialist transformation of property relations in the relatively short-run if only to *maintain* output, employment and social welfare.

To believe otherwise is to embrace the traditional social democratic assumption that social power under capitalism resides ready made in the state, and to conclude on that basis that through elections and legislation the working class can use the state as the *basic instrument* for cumulative reforms which will eventuate in socialism. It is to believe that "class struggle inside the state"—properly supplemented of course by

## Against the Current

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workers' intervention in case the capitalists refuse to play by the rules—is the main road to socialism. Nevertheless, what the Mitterand experiment has demonstrated, once again, is that so long as capitalist property relations are accepted as a given, political power inside the state must subordinate itself to the overwhelming social power which comes from private control over investment. So long as capitalist property relations prevail, profitability and international competitiveness must remain the indispensable condition for investment, production, employment, and social well-being. This is true even in the French nationalized sector, for those enterprises remain independent from one another and investment decisions are still based primarily on relative profitability. The attempt, therefore, in a crisis, to raise workers' power and living standards at the expense of capital, while leaving investment under the laws of the capitalist market if not the capitalists themselves (*especially in the absence of massive working class mobilization*), is bound to lead to declining investment, growing unemployment, the decay of welfare, and ultimately to the discrediting of the reforming government. The only viable alternative is to remove production from "the logic of capital" by placing it increasingly under the control of a national plan developed and administered by the working class itself.

The point, therefore, is *not* that Mitterand "sold out" (although he did so eventually). In fact as soon as Mitterand took office, he did try to implement his program. The immediate result was a massive flight of capital, a run on the franc, and the start of a steep downward slide in investment, production, and employment. This happened even though Mitterand was *not* moving toward socialism. His measures to redistribute income to the poor and to use Keynesian deficit spending to increase output and employment were no more radical than the policies of countless governments in the advanced capitalist countries throughout the 60s and 70s. What was different, of course, was that the world economy for at least a decade, had been bogged down in a deepening capitalist international crisis, and that, over roughly the same period, the French economy had shown itself increasingly incapable of withstanding international competition and vulnerable to de-industrialization. To make matters worse, between 1980 and 1983, the world economy suffered the worst cyclical downturn since the inception of the secular crisis, and just about every capitalist government in the world imposed sharp measures of austerity and deflation.

Predictably, as Mitterand stoked up the French economy through deficit spending and loose money, inflation began to escalate, high foreign interest rates began to appear increasingly attractive, and the relative costs of French production began to grow. Capitalists in France did what any other self-respecting capitalists would do: they sent their money abroad in search of higher returns. Meanwhile, French purchasing power grew while the relative efficiency of French production declined; the French economy sucked in massive quantities of foreign imports, while exports plummeted. To the balance of payments problem, then, there was added the balance of trade problem. Over the course of Mitterand's first year in office, prices skyrocketed,

growth slowed down, and investment actually *declined*. Since the socialists had no intention at that point of taking over the economy from capital, the imposition of austerity to eliminate inflation, restore competitiveness, and increase profitability so as to spur investments was a foregone conclusion.

### The Limits of Electoralism

The ease with which the Mitterand government has turned to austerity makes a mockery of the idea that the Socialist victory *mobilized* the working class behind an anti-austerity politics. An election victory may help to *maintain* an *already ongoing* working class mobilization, as was the case for example in Spain at the time of the upsurge and revolution of 1934–6. In rare instances, moreover, an electoral victory may deepen an incipient mobilization, as happened in 1933–4 after Roosevelt's election gave US workers a new feeling of confidence. What almost never happens, however, is that an *electoral campaign itself* actually organizes and mobilizes the working class. This is because the sort of organization which takes place during an election campaign is not for the purpose of workers' struggle against capital at the point of production and in the streets. It has only one goal: to make sure the citizens, privately and individually, appear at the ballot box to vote for the left candidate. Such atomistic action can hardly provide the basis for workers solidarity and class struggle. But it remains true that during crises like this one, the working class has to resort to the most massive organization and struggle to insure even the mildest of reforms. During the last crisis, it took the mass strikes of 1934 and the CIO upsurge just to win the Wagner Act and Social Security. In France, it took the sitdowns and general strike of 1936 to secure the reforms of the Popular Front government. That so much of the Left, internationally and in the United States, was willing to accept the French Socialists' landslide election as a surrogate for working class mobilization is evidence of the degree to which its new-found "realism" and cynicism have left it disoriented and unprepared.

The unfortunate fact is that the Socialists' victory took place in almost total separation from actual working class mobilization and struggle. None of the competing and allied political tendencies which constitute the Socialist Party has anything like the connections to the working class through the workplaces or the trade unions which are maintained by the north European Social Democratic Parties and by the Communist Parties of Italy and France itself. What made this especially serious is that in the late 1970s, in France as elsewhere, there was a profound erosion of working class power at the level of the shop floor and industry. The number of strikes plummeted, and the number of workers organized in unions dropped off, as the growing reserve army of unemployed put a damper on militancy, and as the spectre of closedowns and runaway shops made the workers fear that they would never get their jobs back. It was especially critical, under these conditions, to rebuild the workplace and union strength of the working class as the necessary *foundation* for any electoral initiative. But the fact is that the Socialist and Communist Parties turned to the electoral realm precisely in order to *substitute* and *com-*



*pensate* for the working class's growing weakness in industry. In doing so, they compounded the problem and left the workers totally unprepared to defend themselves when Mitterand turned to austerity.

### Did Mitterand Have a Choice?

We are not of course implying that no genuinely socialist government could ever justifiably implement austerity. In view of the international character of the economic division of labor and the certain hostility of the capitalist class, any genuinely socialist government would face capital strikes, the flight of capital, and economic sabotage of various sorts. Such a government might therefore conclude that it is necessary to ask sacrifices of the working class to keep costs of production down, in order for example to export commodities so as to be able to buy critically needed imports.

But implementing austerity can only be justified if it is *democratically approved* by the working class and organically linked to the *strengthening of socialism*. A genuinely socialist government would therefore take its case before the direct institutions of the working people—workers councils, trade unions, factory committees, neighborhood organizations—and seek their direct approval. The fact that the French Socialist party had no way of placing the issue of austerity before the French working class, and that the French working class had no institutional mechanism whatever for directly controlling “its government” speaks volumes about the “socialist” character of the present government.

At the same time, a genuinely socialist government would carry through austerity only as part of a more general program for increasing working class control over the economy and society so as to defend itself against capital's power over investment. In France in particular the corollary of austerity should have been working class self-management of the nationalized firms and the election of assemblies of workers composed of representatives of the nationalized firms to oversee the development of a national economic plan. At the local level, the counterpart of austerity should have been increased workers' power within the new institutions of industrial relations, so as to prevent the deterioration of working conditions and to stop layoffs. Even to speak of such policies is to imply a path of encroachment on the sovereignty of capital made possible only by ongoing massive direct action of the working class itself.

### “The Relative Autonomy of the State”

Free of any restraint, the Socialist Party politicians and government officials have done what comes naturally: they have sought to do whatever is necessary to stay in power. Indeed, the whole trajectory of the Socialist Party in office gives away the real meaning of the “relative autonomy of the state” so dear to the hearts of contemporary social democratic theorists. What the Mitterand experiment actually has shown is that the freer any government (socialist or otherwise) is from the restraints of specific social interests, the more fully it will pursue a policy in the service of capitalist profits

and accumulation. This is because only by assuring profits and capitalist accumulation can any government ensure the production, employment and welfare which are required to keep it in office.

It is therefore in no way paradoxical that the Socialist Party is today imparting such a profoundly pro-capitalist content to its “socialist” innovations. Thus, the socialists' major breakthrough in economic policy has been to use their “advanced” nationalization program in the interests of restoring and restructuring French capital. The idea is to channel investment funds to those giant firms in the nationalized (or private) sector which have the best chance of becoming competitive on the international market.

Meanwhile, the Mitterandists are employing their new system of industrial relations to integrate the unions into tri-partite capitalist-labor-government commissions to help plan industrial policy. At the level of the enterprise, “workers control” is coming to mean nothing more than *mitbestimmung*, already familiar from the German experience—worker participation on managerial boards of directors. The overriding idea, of course, is to involve the working class in the process of restructuring of French capital, and to encourage it to participate in its own exploitation.

### Socialism or Capitalist Corporatism?

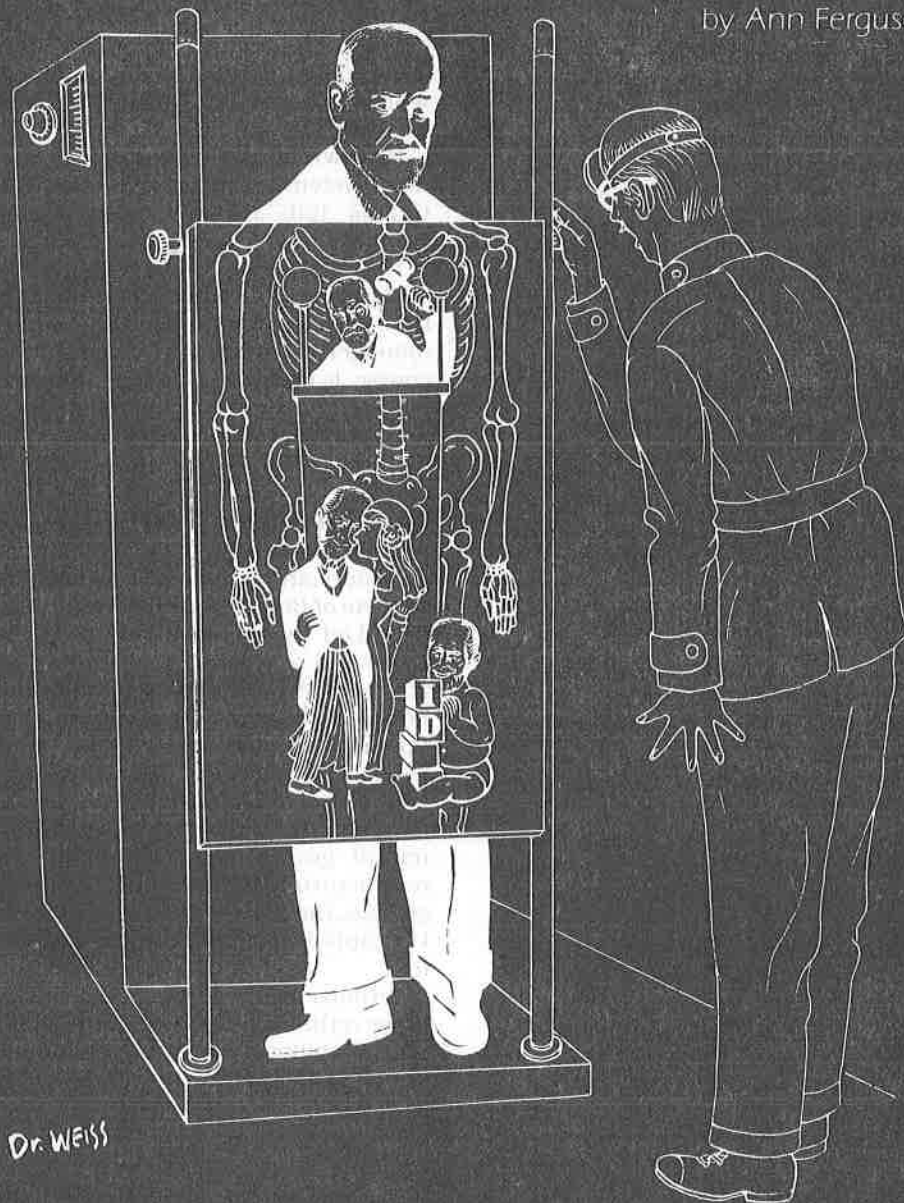
If all this sounds eerily familiar, it should. . . at least to American readers of *Business Week*, the *New York Review of Books*, and the recent manifestos of the AFL-CIO. Led by the investment banker Felix Rohatyn, these and other forces are calling for the reindustrialization of America through a new national “industrial policy,” to be administered jointly by capital, labor, and business, under the slogans of “cooperation” and “equality of sacrifice.” Indeed, many of those same leftists whose “realism” has led them to embrace reformist socialism and enthusiastically to greet the Mitterand government, are today arguing that such restructuring is inevitable. To these hard-headed socialists, the left should not oppose the restructuring of US capital, but instead *give restructuring a left content*.

Perhaps the French experience will make these comrades rethink their perspective. In France, the working class is obviously far stronger and more politically conscious than it is in the US. It has a long tradition of socialism, a major Communist Party, and even a recent experience of mass political action in May 1968. Finally, in France, the Socialist Party came to power on the *promise* that modernization would be part and parcel of social reform. Nevertheless, this same “Socialist” party has taken as its highest goal to *reorganize French capitalism*, under a regime of *austerity plus working class cooperation*. Socialism has been reduced to the restructuring of *national capitalism* through the medium of *corporatism*.

Do the American partisans of reform socialism seriously believe that they can make the electoral/legislative piecemeal road to socialism work better than have their French counterparts? Do they really think that they can more successfully manipulate a “left” restructuring of capitalism? Surely, these are the real utopians! ■

# THE SEX DEBATE IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: A Socialist-Feminist View

by Ann Ferguson



In the last four years, American feminists have been polarized into two camps on the issue of feminist sexual morality. The radical feminists argue that in a male-dominant society sexuality involves danger. The dominant-subordinate power relationships in sex as it is normally practiced perpetuate violence against women. On this ground radical feminists condemn S/M, pornography, prostitution, cruising (promiscuous sex with strangers), adult/child sexuality and sexual role-playing (e.g., butch-femme relationships).<sup>1</sup> Women Against Pornography and Women Against Violence Against Women are organized around this point of view. The opposing camp, self-styled "anti-prudes" whom I term libertarian feminists, charge radical feminists with being Victorian. For libertarians the key feature of sexuality is the liberating potential of the exchange of pleasure between consenting adults. They support any consensual sexuality that brings the participants pleasure whether that be S/M,

pornography, cruising, adult/child sexuality, etc.<sup>2</sup>

Increasingly, radical feminists are members of or identify with a lesbian feminist community which rejects male-dominated heterosexual sex and insists that only a lesbian identity is politically correct. On the other side, the libertarians maintain that even more marginal sexual minorities are the vanguard to full sexual liberation.

Each side in this dispute has important insights, but both are working with a number of unexamined assumptions about the nature of sexuality, social power, and sexual freedom. Although socialist-feminists can be found on both sides, many of us would like to find a way to go beyond the debate so that we can develop effective strategies for organizing around sexual issues. Most important, we need to have an approach to sexuality which allows us to present an *attainable* vision of ideal sexual relations as well as a *transitional* sexual morality. By this I mean a morality that can be practiced by people like ourselves, formed under existing historical conditions yet committed to radical social change. After critiquing the existing positions I propose an alternative approach that I hope will move us closer to this goal.<sup>3</sup>

## The Radical Feminist Framework

American radical feminist theories of sexuality develop against a background of particular political issues in the late 60s and early 70s. These included *both* a defense of women's right to sexual pleasure (female orgasms) and the importance of legal protection from one of the dangers of heterosexual intercourse: unwanted pregnancy (hence, the right to abortion).

The early influential theorists Simone de Beauvoir and Shulameth Firestone emphasized that restrictions placed on women make sexuality dangerous, unfree and restricted in pleasure.

The question of how lesbianism as a sexual and political practice relates to feminism initiated the second phase of radical feminism. The lesbian-feminist tendency emerged when the women's movement refused to make lesbian rights a feminist issue. The theory of the "woman-identified woman" trod a thin line between praising the liberated sexuality of lesbian women and arguing that the really important contribution of lesbian relationships to feminism was not so much their example of equality and mutual sexual pleasure but of the possibility of strong emotional bonding between women. In the more recent formulations of this position, the ambiguity drops away. Adrienne Rich argues that by forcing female children to redirect their original love for their mothers, compulsory heterosexuality is the primary mechanism perpetuating male dominance. Rich argues that we need to recover "the erotic in female terms: as that which is unconfined to any single part of the body or solely to the body itself."<sup>4</sup> Her characterization of essential female sexuality suggests that its key feature is not *physical* desire but *emotional* bonding and connections: it is the *sharing* of joy, whether physical, emotional or psychic that is central and not the experience of intense physical passion or release.

## Sexual Violence

If the first phase of radical feminist theory emphasized the pleasures as well as the dangers of heterosexual sex, while the second phase concentrated on the liberating content of lesbian sexuality, the third and current phase has emphasized almost exclusively the dangers of male sexuality—sexual violence against women in the form of rape, domestic violence, female sexual slavery/prostitution and pornography. Pornography, Andrea Dworkin writes, is male cultural sadism against women.

"In literary pornography . . . the ethos of this murderous male-positive culture is revealed in its skeletal form: male sadism feeds on female masochism; male dominance is nourished by female submission." (In pornography, sadism is the means by which men establish their dominance. Sadism is the authentic exercise of power which confirms manhood; and the first characteristic of manhood is that its existence is based on the negation of the female—manhood can only be certified by abject female degradation, a degradation never abject enough until the victim's body and will have both been destroyed.)<sup>5</sup>

Susan Griffin points out that whether or not pornography directly causes violence against women, the mere portrayal of women as naked sex objects intends to degrade women. The dominant images in sexual advertising and pornography present women's bodies as objects to be possessed by men. Nude imagery in pornography is overwhelmingly female. This asymmetrical presentation is a type of symbolic violence against women in which men project all the hated and feared shame and vulnerability they puritanically associate with their own bodies onto women.<sup>6</sup>

The conclusion of this radical feminists line of analysis is that women's heterosexual sexual activity, whether imaged in pornography or actually practiced, becomes a tool of sexual violence against women.

To summarize: radical feminists can be said to hold the following four views on sexuality:

1. Heterosexual sexual relations generally are characterized by an ideology of *sexual objectification* (men as subjects/masters; women as objects/slaves) which supports male sexual violence against women. Thus, an emphasis on the *danger* involved in standard heterosexual sex.
2. Feminists should repudiate any sexual practices or enjoyments which support or "normalize" male sexual violence.
3. Feminists should reclaim control over female sexuality by developing a concern with our *own* sexual priorities, which differ from men's; i.e., more concern with *process* (intimacy, foreplay, emotional sensitivity) and *commitment* and less with performance (i.e., compulsive genital sex with attention primarily on (male) orgasm).
4. The ideal sexual relationship is between fully consenting, equal partners who identify with each other, fully share emotional involvements (e.g., no double standard monogamy), do not involve themselves in strongly polarized roles (e.g., butch-femme) and share physical pleasures.

From these four aspects of the radical feminist sexual morality, we can abstract the following theoretical assumptions about sexuality, social power and sexual freedom:

5. *Human sexuality* is a form of expression between

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people that is a way of *bonding* and communicating *emotion* (The Primacy of Intimacy Theory).

6. *Theory of Social Power*: In patriarchal societies sexuality becomes a tool of male domination by the phenomenon of *sexual objectification*. This is a social mechanism which operates through the institution of masculine and feminine roles in the patriarchal nuclear family. The attendant ideology of sexual objectification is sado-masochism, i.e., masculinity as sadistic control over women and femininity as submission to the male will. This ideology is supported and perpetuated through pornography, sexual advertising, prostitution, unreconstructed heterosexual relations and sexual role playing, particularly butch-femme roles and S/M sexuality.

7. *Sexual freedom* requires sexual equality of partners, equal control as agents in the sexual exchange and equal respect for each other both as subject and as body. Sexual freedom requires the elimination of all patriarchal institutions (e.g., the pornography industry, the patriarchal family, prostitution, compulsory heterosexuality) and sexual practices (S/M, cruising, adult/child relationships and butch/femme roles) in which sexual objectification occurs.

### The Libertarian Feminist Framework

The libertarian feminist tendency arose in response to the third phase of radical feminist theory. Not surprisingly, the theoretical leaders of the libertarian feminist camp are those whose sexual practices have been seen as particularly suspect by radical feminist theory: heterosexual feminists who were guilt-tripped in the lesbian/straight split of the second phase, lesbians engaging in butch/femme relationships, and most importantly, lesbian-feminists involved in S/M sexuality. Two of the leading libertarian spokeswomen are self-identified S/M lesbian-feminists who charge that radical feminist analysis and practice have become an anti-sex tendency. Radical feminists' emphasis on emotional bonding rather than pleasure leads to a moralistic condemnation of any sexual interaction seeking erotic *bodily* pleasure rather than emotional intimacy. Their analysis of pornography overemphasizes the violent images and underemphasizes the validation of the right to sexual pleasure for its own sake that much pornography expresses. Groups like Women Against Pornography and Women Against Violence Against Women give little or no attention to the importance of developing a liberatory erotica. By refusing to validate the consensual search for sexual pleasure (no matter what fantasies may be involved) the radical feminists' moralism supports the traditional asexual role for women.

As Gayle Rubin argues:

"Sexuality is seen as a male value and activity. The female/feminist view of sex is that it is *something that good/nice women do not especially like*. It is not a motivating force in female behavior. Sexuality is most often something men impose upon women, thus the equation of sex and violence, and the conflation of sex with rape. These were the sexual theories I was taught growing up. I never expected to have them rammed down my throat by the women's movement. Man the Id and Woman the Chaste are Victorian ideas, not feminist ones."<sup>7</sup>

In addition, Rubin charges, by denying sexual minorities a place in the women's movement, the radical

feminists are ultimately supporting the status quo patriarchal sexually repressive order.

The Libertarian Feminist framework can be summarized in a manner which brings out the sharp opposition in emphasis to the Radical Feminist framework in the following four views:

1. Standard heterosexual sexual practices are characterized by sexual repression. The norms of patriarchal bourgeois sexuality repress the sexual minorities, thus keeping the "normals" pure and under control.

2. Feminists should repudiate any theoretical analyses, legal restrictions, or moral judgments which stigmatize sexual minorities and thus restrict the freedom of all.

3. Feminists should reclaim control over female sexuality by demanding the right to practice whatever gives us pleasure and satisfaction, whether or not they be sexual practices (S/M, cruising, adult/child sexuality, nonmonogamy) traditionally identified with male sexuality. An emphasis on the importance of sexual *pleasure*.

4. The ideal sexual relationship is between fully consenting, equal partners who negotiate to maximize each other's sexual pleasure and satisfaction by any means they choose.

The theoretical assumptions about sexuality, social power and sexual freedom they draw from the above sexual morality are:

5. *Human sexuality* is the exchange of physical erotic and genital sexual pleasures (The Primacy of Pleasure theory).

6. *Theory of Social Power*: Sexual energy is directed to objects by social institutions, interactions and discourses which distinguish the normal/legitimate/healthy from the abnormal/illegitimate/unhealthy. This institutionalizes sexual repression and creates a hierarchy of social power and sexual identities. In fact, however, there is no ground for any distinction between healthy and unhealthy sex. (The Social Relativity of Sexual Values.)

7. *Sexual freedom* requires oppositional practices, i.e., the transgression of socially respectable categories of sexuality, refusing to draw the line on what counts as "politically correct" sexuality.

### Critique of Radical and Libertarian Feminism

#### Intimacy vs. Pleasure

Radical feminists assert the value of emotional intimacy possible in sexual interactions while the libertarian feminists emphasize pleasure. But neither emotions nor physical pleasures are things which can be isolated and discussed in a vacuum. Sexual pleasures and emotions are always directed to objects. Even erotic pleasure is not simply a kind of "raw feel" which has value above and beyond the social relationships in which it is produced. There is no way therefore, except the historical context to judge priorities connected to sexuality. Physical pleasure, emotional intimacy and biological parenthood are all values which may be achieved from sexual interaction. There is no one universal "function" that can be posited for human sexuality. Rather, sexuality is a bodily energy whose objects, meaning and social value are historically constructed and define forms of affection (peer bonding) and nurturance (e.g., parent-child bonding) as well as specific erotic partners.<sup>8</sup>

From this point of view, we have to reject the radical

feminist notion of some essential female sexuality stolen from us by patriarchal practices. The goal of emotional intimacy is no more natural or essential than the goal of physical pleasure in sexual interaction. In the Western patriarchal system of organizing sexuality and motherhood,<sup>9</sup> the pole of female sexuality has been differentiated from the pole of male sexuality along the lines of emotional intimacy vs. physical pleasure.<sup>10</sup> But not all societies have organized sexuality into a dual gender system. So, when the two camps accuse each other of being "female" or "male" identified respectively, they are treating historically developed sexual identities as if they were human universals.

Compulsory heterosexuality does force the girl to repress her erotic feelings for her mother more severely than those for her father. This fact may explain the difference between female and male sexuality as developed within the heterosexist mother-centered infant care of contemporary society: girls must repress erotic feelings for their primary love object while they are permitted to retain their emotional connection with her. But it does not follow that the "essence" of female sexuality is to be mother- (and hence female-) directed. Rather, one's sexual objects are defined by the social contexts in which one's ongoing gender identity is constructed in relation to one's peers.

Let me give a personal example to illustrate this point. The fact that my "original" or *first* sexual object was my mother is no more relevant to my *present* lesbian identity than the fact that my *second* sexual object was my father. Rather, what counts is, first, the historical and social contexts in my teenage years which allowed me to develop a first physical love relationship with a woman; and, second, the existence of a strong self-identified lesbian-feminist oppositional culture today which allowed me to turn toward women again from an adult life hitherto exclusively heterosexual.

Nonetheless, the radical feminists are right that sexual objectification (man as subject/woman as object) does by and large characterize patriarchally constructed heterosexual sexuality. Their analysis may overemphasize the ways that sexual fantasies of dominance and submission (rape, sadomasochism) can lead to male violence and female victimization. But feminists must ask: *why* are sadomasochistic fantasies so pervasive among both heterosexuals and lesbian/gays? What do the proliferation of such fantasies in pornography and the expansion of the video tape porn industry in the last few years from a 5 million to 5 billion dollar business tell us about the need of men to maintain a sense of male dominance? And why is the sexual objectification of women in advertising such a regular feature of advanced industrial capitalist societies? In other words, as a critique of sexist and heterosexist structures of sexuality in our society, radical feminist analyses help us understand possibilities for change and resistance.

### The Problem of Consent

When we turn to the libertarian feminists we find that their approach is just as ahistorical as the radical feminists. Their concern that consenting partners be

able to "do their thing" in order to maximize sexual pleasure contains unexamined individualist assumptions and overlooks the need to value the objects of pleasure as well as the context in which the pleasure is taking place. The defenders of S/M do not see that if we may draw one line against non-consensual pleasure on the feminist grounds that sexual practices must demonstrate equal respect for persons, then we can draw another line *for the very same reason* at pleasure taken in certain sorts of objects, i.e., the shaming or degradation of oneself or another.

Secondly, the libertarian feminists do not seriously examine the problematic notion of consent itself. Libertarians admit that feminists must draw the line somewhere: rape, battering, incest are unacceptable sexual practices, they argue, because one partner has not given their consent. Now the problem with stopping at this definition is that it cannot be assumed that consent is always freely given, i.e. "true consent." This distinction between real and apparent consent is at the heart of the Marxist critique of the bourgeois theory of capitalism: the workers' freedom to contract with the employer is only apparent, covering a reality of coercion.

Gayle Rubin proposed in a workshop at the Barnard Sexuality Conference in 1982 that feminists should reject the marxist appearance/reality dichotomy in the sphere of sexuality. Rubin denies that there is any gap between an individual's conscious affirmation of consent and the conditions under which true consent takes place. But we must reject this view. Under what conditions are sexual partners sufficiently *equal* in terms of material options to have the "choice" to refuse as well as to engage in sexual practices? Is an economically dependent housewife really free to "consent" to S/M sex? Or a teenage hustler to an older person in adult/child sex?

Libertarian advocates argue that lesbian-feminist S/M engages in dominance/submission rituals as a form of sexual *theatre* or *play* which does not indicate that there are *actual* dominance/subordination relations between the partners. Perhaps not. The problem is, however, that there is no easy way to know for sure to what extent psychological roles get reinforced by fantasies. It is possible that S/M fantasies could be eliminated through a feminist sex therapy. If so, shouldn't feminists be exploring this alternative so that we do not have to run the risk that S/M role playing perpetuates a social hierarchy of power between its participants?<sup>11</sup>

### Theories of Social Power

Both radical and libertarian theories describe patriarchal sexual power as too monolithic and static, failing to perceive that patriarchal and heterosexist sexual practices are filled with contradictory tensions.

In her argument against scapegoating sexual minorities,<sup>12</sup> Gayle Rubin holds that a social process of labeling which distinguishes normal/healthy/legitimate sexuality from abnormal/unhealthy/illegitimate sexuality maintains social power relations. Since every individual is forced to define his/her personal identity by membership in either the "normal" or the "deviant" group, dominants retain social power over both groups.

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The normals must remain pure to stay normal. This keeps them under control while deviants are controlled by legal and social repression.

Rubin is surely right about the impact of labelling. The powerful in our society can define practices which are in their interest as normal (corporate price-fixing, tax breaks, the sexual double standard) and those which are not as deviant (simple theft, gay/lesbian relationships). But this perspective provides no answers to key questions for feminists: (1) what political strategies are possible to challenge the dominant legitimizing practices? (2) What alternative visions of social and political health do feminists have to counter those of the dominants? The libertarians' answers are inadequate.

### Vanguard Strategy

The libertarians' strategy for increasing sexual freedom is to challenge the normal/deviant categories of the dominants by openly engaging in "oppositional practices," practices stigmatized by the dominant culture. They define themselves as an oppositional subculture and celebrate, validate, affirm—indeed, present themselves as a vanguard group for human liberation in an attempt to expose the hidden domination relations present in the so-called "normal" practices.

There are obvious dangers in this strategy. For, the more groups insist on politicizing sexual identifications which have been invented as categories of social control (e.g., lesbian/gay, S/M, man/boy love, butch/femme relationships, etc.), the easier it is for the Right to condemn those who want women's and sexual liberation as all "queers," i.e., sexual minorities/deviants! Indeed, as Foucault has argued, the development of distinctive deviant sexual identities as opposed to mere sexual practices, is itself part of a contemporary discourse of power that controls both those defined as normal and as deviant in the interest of the bourgeois class (and, we should add, of men as a sex class). How then can any kind of political sexual identity avoid the normal/deviant logic of control?

The underlying general problem with both the radical and libertarian feminist strategies for sexual liberation is their appeal to vanguard politics. Shocking the average person by a "do your thing" theory of sexual health allows the libertarian no consistent critical position from which to challenge the present construction of social power. Since many of the theorists seem to assume that all human sexuality inevitably involves power relations, their claim to be a liberatory vanguard can only tend toward cynicism about the potential of fundamental change in our sexuality.

The radical feminist tendency to focus exclusively on the power of cultural sadism in enforcing male dominance ignores race and class differences between women which make the "turn" to a lesbian identity more than an ideological issue. A lesbian choice is more possible for white middle class women than for black, hispanic and working class women. Economic and social dependence on fathers, brothers and husbands and a strong sense of community identity as a condition for survival of the group may block any interest in identifying erotic feelings for women as important priorities.

### Contradictions within Sexual Ideology

The radical feminists also overlook the contradictions within contemporary capitalist patriarchy that are undermining traditional sexual ideologies by allowing many women more power vis a vis individual men than previous generations of women, e.g., independent incomes from wage labor, the possibility of divorce and public welfare as a resort from an oppressive marriage. All of this has fueled feminist aspects of the sexual revolution (e.g., demands for the right to full orgasmic pleasure, a questioning of double standard monogamy, etc.). Indeed, the possibility of an open lesbian-feminist identity, even quasi-respectable in some areas of the country, is a mark of an increased degree of sexual independence for women.

Pornographic practices, discourses and images primarily directed to men reproduce women as sex objects. But these are contradictory to other popular discourses and images directed primarily to women or joint audiences, e.g., the literature of romance, PG movies and TV soap operas. If we look at the whole system of such ideological sexual communications, we find a set of highly contradictory assumptions. These can be seen to constitute a distinctive blend of liberal individualist and patriarchal thought.

I suggest the following set of beliefs on sexuality and love are characteristic of contemporary capitalist patriarchy:

1. A voluntary love partnership (i.e., a love between equals) is an important human value (Principle of Romantic Love).
2. Everyone (male and female) has the right to sexual equality (i.e., equal right to sexual pleasures) and sexual freedom (right to consensual interactions). (Principle of Sexual Equality and Freedom.)
3. Since men and women are different, they ought to engage in complementary sex gender roles (the complementary gender role principle).
4. The masculine gender role is to initiate while the feminine role is to submit (The Male Choice Principle).
5. Men generate sexual desire while women generate responsiveness (The Male Producer/Consumer Principle).

The first two beliefs develop from the market principles of capitalist production (i.e., the right to equality and consent). However, they cannot be achieved in a capitalist patriarchal system which rests on a gender division of labor in the economy, family and personal life. Furthermore, growing sexual consumerism in the media also challenges traditional patriarchal ideology by presenting men as well as women as sex objects. Of course sexual objectification is still asymmetrical in that more women than men appear as sexual objects. But the countertendency suggests that women too can produce desire and consume men.

Locked in their own struggle over whose sexuality—lesbian or lesbian feminist S/M—is "politically correct," both camps within the women's movement have failed to appreciate how we might use the contradictions in existing ideology to reach out into the community of "normals." One effective strategy would be an educational campaign showing how romantic love, sexual equality, and sexual freedom are counterposed to sexual consumerism and gender dualism.

The libertarians emphasize the priority of pleasure over emotional intimacy as a goal in sexual exchange, while the radical feminists emphasize the priority of

emotional intimacy over pleasure. Neither of their positions on what constitutes a healthy sexuality can appeal to the majority of people nor break gender dualist ways of thinking about sexuality. We need both an alternative strategy for sexual liberation and an alternate vision of sexual health. This will require different ways of thinking about sexuality, in particular a historical perspective on contemporary structures of sexual power. Finally we require a *transitional* feminist sexual morality. It is not enough to envision how people's sexuality could be different after a socialist-feminist revolution. We also need to make decisions about contemporary issues like pornography, S/M sexuality, adult/child sexuality, etc. in a way that strengthens rather than divides feminist and left forces in their critique of contemporary capitalist patriarchal sexuality.

## A Socialist-Feminist Alternative

### Vision of Sexual Liberation

Complete sexual and emotional fulfillment requires that men and women learn the skills of emotional intimacy and nurturance *as well* as the joys of erotic sex. Furthermore, we must demand our right to be sexually ambiguous: for example to relate to women as sexual partners for one segment of our life then switch to men; to stay with one sex or partner; or to alternate sexual preference regularly. This means attacking not only compulsory heterosexuality but the idea that one's sexual practices are a part of one's permanent identity. If gender identity is seen as a *process* of defining oneself in the exchange of sexual and emotional energy, there are as many genders as there are patterns of interaction (work, sports, family/kinship, sexuality, friendship) between humans.

Mutual consent is a basic condition of liberated sexuality. But consent implies social equality and therefore, a social transformation of economic, political and kinship structures, creating equality between men and women and, as far as possible between older and younger people (adult/child sexuality).

A socialist transformation, eliminating the split between the public commodity economy and the private family economy, and a radical reorganization of parenting, compulsory heterosexuality and household kinship relations is necessary to end the gender division in wage labor, parenting and sexual exchanges. Only then will people be able to combine affection and passion into most of their relationships.

### Feminist Counterculture

Our alternative vision can be made concrete by creating liberatory erotica and sex therapy workshops. Here we could develop techniques for bypassing the deforming aspects of the existing dual gender system, including new non-power-oriented sexual fantasies.

To modify one's sexual interactions, is not sufficient to challenge the repressive structures of gender duality. Feminists must stress the importance of equalitarian family and household structures for sexual liberation. We must strengthen our networks as single mothers, as communal households, as lesbian/gays, as "blended families" (e.g., where children and nonbiolo-

gical "step" or "social parents" live together). Our boys and girls need role models of strong mothers and gentle fathers, of many "chosen" parents, to offset the pervasive influence of the mass media and public school images of "correct" family life. The best way to counter the New Right's attack on feminism as sexually promiscuous, egoistic and non-family oriented is to demonstrate that our views of sexual freedom do incorporate commitments of a new kind—to kin and family networks of our own choosing.

### A Transitional Feminist Sexual Morality

The Women's Movement needs a transitional sexual morality to energize our collective consciousness. This requires that we find ways to avoid ostracizing our own "fringe group" of feminist sexual minorities by moralizing and guilt-tripping. At the same time, however, we must condemn sexual practices that involve male domination and develop a critique of sexual consumerism that reaches out to men and women who are not already identified as feminist.

How can we respect sexual differences among feminists yet create a feminist ethic that goes beyond superficial consent? I suggest we adopt a three-part distinction between forbidden, safe and *suspect* sexual practices.

The difference between a *forbidden* and a *suspect* practice is that the latter involves taking *risks* from a feminist perspective because the practices are suspected of leading to dominance/subordination relationships. To say the practices are suspect implies that there is no final *proof* that they in fact must involve dominance/subordination relationships. Rather, there is conflicting evidence at present. *Safe* practices, on the other hand, are those where there is nothing about the general features of the act or the social structures in which it is undertaken which suggests that it is risky in the above sense.

Forbidden sexual practices are ones which feminists think should be illegal. These would include rape and domestic battering. Some might argue that these are not sexual acts at all but acts of physical aggression. However, feminists must expose the connection between sex and violence implicit in the current sexual ideology and its dominance/subordination themes (men initiate, women submit; men generate sexual desire, women respond, etc.).

I would agree with Radical Feminists that violent pornography should be legally forbidden, i.e. pornography which portrays women (or men) gagged, bound or in ways clearly meant to be degrading. I would argue that the symbolic effect of hard core pornography is damaging enough to justify its censorship even though the question of the direct causal effect is controversial.<sup>13</sup>

I classify soft pornography as suspect rather than forbidden because I believe that it is most often the context of use which determines whether given material is erotic or pornographic. Feminists can take other tactics than state censorship against sexual advertising, films, etc. that fall into the soft pornography category. If the matter is considered objectionable by a local community of feminists, pickets, consumer boycotts and educational talks to potential consumers are

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good ways to de-mystify the asymmetrical spectacle of woman's body thus presented.

Included in the forbidden category of sexual practices should be those difficult cases where there is *strong* reason to think that consensual permission is not present given contemporary social inequalities of the parties, i.e., incest and adult/child sexuality. Obviously, it is not easy to draw the line between "adult" and "child." Not all societies institutionalize the teenage years as a limbo zone between childhood and adulthood. But, we infantilize teenagers by economic and social dependence at the same time as the media and market forces of sexual consumerism encourage them to experiment with the codes of adult sexuality (treating themselves as sexual commodities). Therefore, we should protect them from individuals past this dependency period who are likely to have greater economic resources and autonomy.

We will not be able to resolve doubts about the equality of the participants in man/boy love unless we find a way to take into account (and eliminate) structured material inequalities between adults and children. Since capitalist patriarchy cannot eliminate these inequalities, I would argue that adult/child sex should be legally forbidden. Feminist legislation on statutory rape should ban sexual relations between children under eighteen and anyone more than six years older than they. This would allow teenagers to be sexual with their peers and with young adults. At the same time it would protect them from potentially exploitative sexual relationships until they reach a minimal maturity level.

Our feminist transitional sexual morality should be

pluralist with respect to consensual practices. That is, we should not condemn feminists who wish to engage in suspect practices. We should presume that a feminist is concerned with equality in all her transactions and respect her right to take risks. Nonetheless, if we want to uncover and eliminate the deep structures of gender duality in sexual practices, we must treat as problematic any practices suspected of dominance/subordination dynamics. Only then can we investigate alternate ways to achieve sexual desire and/or to restructure the situation so the practice is no longer suspect.

Suspect practices of interest to feminists include the male breadwinner/female housewife sex prostitution, S/M, and butch/femme relationships. Each of these is suspect because no matter whether or not the partners consent the structure of the practices suggests that one partner will be unequal in power to the other. If feminists want to take risks in these areas, our transitional sexual morality would give them a perfect right to do so. But such practices *per se* cannot be seen as actions of a feminist sexual vanguard: indeed, our liberatory erotica and sex therapy workshops would be exploring creative alternatives which would render them unnecessary for sexual pleasure and emotional intimacy.

A successful strategy for sexual liberation cannot be vanguardist. We must expose the contradictory nature of contemporary sexual ideology by a set of oppositional practices which allow us to develop an alternative culture of erotica, nurturance and parenting at the same time as we do outreach to the larger community with our new sexual and social vision■

<sup>1</sup>cf. Robin Linden, Darlene Pagano, Diana Russell and Susan Leigh Star, eds. *Against SadoMasochism* (E. Palo Alto, CA: Frog in The Well Press, 1982); Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976); Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1979); Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Oppressing Women* (New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1981); Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982); Laura Lederer, ed. *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (New York: Dell, 1981); and Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, eds. *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement* (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975).

<sup>2</sup>cf. Pat Califia, "Feminism and SadoMasochism," *Heresies*, 12: 30-34; Gayle Rubin "The Leather Menace: Comments on Politics and S/M" in Samois, ed. *Coming to Power* (Berkeley: Samois, 1981); Gayle Rubin, with Deidre English and Amber Hollibaugh "Talking Sex," *Socialist Review* 58, v. 11, #4 (July/August 1981): 43-62; and Gayle Rubin "Sexual Politics, The New Right and The Sexual Fringe" in Daniel Tsang, ed., *The Age Taboo: Gay Male Sexuality, Power and Consent* (Boston: Alyson, 1981).

<sup>3</sup>A longer version of this paper in which my own theoretical approach will be published elsewhere as "Toward a Feminist Sexual Morality: Sexual Freedom, Pleasure and Danger."

<sup>4</sup>Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs*, V. 5 #4 (Summer, 1980), p. 651.

<sup>5</sup>Andrea Dworkin, *Our Blood* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 102.

<sup>6</sup>Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup>Gayle Rubin, "The Leather Menace," p. 215.

<sup>8</sup>For a historical perspective on the development of sexual

identity, cf. Ferguson, "Patriarchy, Sexual Identity and the Sexual Revolution," *Signs*, v. 7, #1 (Autumn 1981); Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: A History of Homosexuality from the 19th century to the present* (London: Quartet Books, 1979); and Michel Foucault, *A History of Sexuality*, v. 1 (New York: Random, 1980).

<sup>9</sup>Elsewhere, I have analyzed this system as one mode of what I call "sex/affective" production. Ferguson "On Conceiving Motherhood and Sexuality: a feminist materialist perspective" in Joyce Trebilcot, ed. forthcoming 1983, *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld).

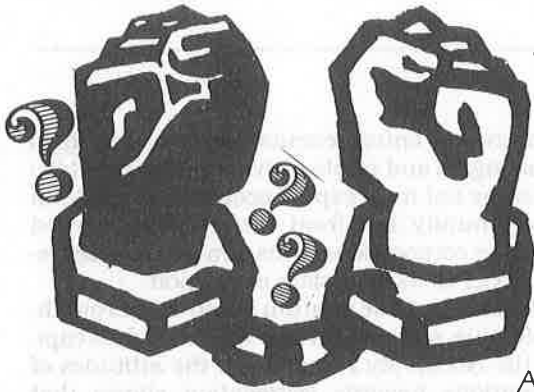
<sup>10</sup>cf. Ethel Spector Person, "Sexuality as a Mainstay of Identity," *Signs*, v. 5, #4 (Summer, 1980).

<sup>11</sup>There may not be such a clear line between fantasies and reality as the libertarians want to draw. cf. Diamond, Irene, "Pornography and Repression: A Reconsideration of 'Who' and 'What'," *Signs*, v. 5, #4 (Summer 1980): 686-701. S/M defenders argue that the fantasy rituals of master/slave or Nazi/Jew that practitioners play out are strictly part of a sexual game and should not be confused with the reality of such power roles. Unfortunately, politicizing an S/M identity if it means carrying one's fantasies to the public's eyes, tends to confuse the viewers. How can one distinguish between advocacy of Nazism and mere "play" for one who dresses in public in Nazi regalia? (cf. Alice Walker, "A Letter to the Times, or, Should This SadoMasochism Be Saved?" in Linden et al. *Against SadoMasochism*).

<sup>12</sup>Gayle Rubin in Tsang, *The Age Taboo*.

<sup>13</sup>cf. Diamond, "Pornography and Repression"; Diana Russell, "Pornography and Violence: What Does the New Research Say?" in Lederer, ed. *Take Back the Night*.





# WHICH WAY FOR THE BLACK MOVEMENT?

AN INTERVIEW WITH MANNING MARABLE by JOEL JORDAN

*Manning Marable is well-known in the American Left as an activist and as a most influential Black socialist in the U.S. His syndicated column, "From the Grassroots," appears in 135 newspapers and reaches four to five million readers every week with a socialist analysis. Marable is Director of the Race Relations Institute of Fisk University, and a Vice Chairperson of the Democratic Socialists of America. The editors feel that his views on a number of issues such as the Black working class, the new Black middle class, nationalism, and independent political action will be of interest to our readers. As for the last theme, ATC does not, of course, share Marable's views on the Democratic Party, and we shall be continuing the debate on this vital problem for the left in future issues.*

**JJ:** In your first two books, *From the Grassroots* and *Blackwater* you place a great deal of stress on the changing patterns of racism within the United States as well as the changing class structure of the black community within the last 30 or 40 years. Could you summarize your views on this and their implications for a black liberation strategy?

**MM:** I think it's clear that over the twentieth century the character and the institutional framework for American white racism has been altered. We've seen this through the struggle of the Civil Rights movement and the desegregation movement in the 1940s, '50s and '60s. But when I talk about racism it's important to have a clear definition. To me, racism has to be understood as an *institutional* process rather than any kind of random pattern of intolerant collective behavior, and for me it's a process of persecution and violence that is at the service of white power. Its purpose is the *systemic* exploitation of black labor power in the work place and black social and political life. Now when we look at racism in this country, what we see are a number of facets that stem from a central core cause which is the superexploitation of black labor power at the point of production—that is to say, the acceleration of capital accumulation. The extraction of surplus value produced by black workers is exploited and extrapolated at a much greater degree than that produced by white labor historically throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

But we can't simply exclude other dimensions of what white racism is. We have to see, secondly, that racism manifests itself in a body of policies which call for the systematic physical exclusion of black people from full political and cultural participation in society through legal forms of segregation, that is Jim Crow, or *de facto* forms of segregation. We also have to see racism as the ideological oppression of black people through the ideological hegemony of racism throughout all the institutions of civil and political society.

But if racism has altered, it has changed in *form*, not in *essence* during the mid-20th century. The Civil Rights movement succeeded in barring, first of all, the use of legal segregation within American civil society and, secondly, in a more subtle way, it has transformed the politi-

cal and cultural discourse of American society and race relations between black and white. That is, it's no longer politically acceptable to be an open overt racist or white supremacist. Reagan has to put forward certain reactionary public policies that are designed to obliterate sections of the black working class, black poor people and unemployed people without using a public discourse that can in any way be construed as white supremacist. It is the political discourse not the dynamics that have changed.

Still another paradox. With legal desegregation, and with the change in the political discourse, the situation confronting black activists, in a curious way, is worse. Here's why. From the rise of Jim Crow racial segregation in the late 19th century to the 1950s, it was relatively clear to the overwhelming majority of black people that American democracy, such as it was, was a fraud as it affected black people, that the American state was based on a lie and that lie was white supremacy. So it was fairly easy to organize black people against white racism because the manifestations of racism were something that the black people saw and felt and understood every day.

With the 1960s all of that changed. I have black students today who tell me they can not remember ever being discriminated against! Others cannot remember or even comprehend what Jim Crow was because the *manifestations* of racism have changed so in the last twenty years. We have a different political problem—a problem of consciousness and a problem of political organization within the black community that black activists have not successfully dealt with in the 1970s or '80s.

**JJ:** What do you think accounts for this apparent alteration of racism?

**MM:** What we're looking at here is an historical process that evolved over a period of several generations wherein several different actors were critically important as they influenced the process of race relations in America. One of the actors was northeastern capital and multinational capital. Prior to World War II, the South was basically the closest thing to a feudal state you can imagine. Data on Mississippi agricultural production in 1940 shows that only two out of every hundred farmers had a tractor. In the 1930s, and more importantly, in the '40s, something like 1.6 million black people left the South to go to the

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North. They left for a lot of different reasons. It was a push-pull effect. A lot of people left because of jobs. Executive Order 8802, signed by Roosevelt against his will when pressured by A.P. Randolph with his March on Washington, created a certain number of black jobs in defense plants. My parents, my mother particularly, was one of the blacks hired at that time because of 8802.

The fighting of World War II and the GI Bill of Rights in '46 led to an escalation of the numbers of blacks, men who had fought in the war like my father, taking advantage of educational opportunities. As a result, there was a tremendous increase in the numbers of blacks, men and women, who were attending college in the '50s. You have the growth of a new kind of black middle class in the '50s and '60s particularly after the mid 1960s.

**JJ:** It seems to me that this process of class differentiation within the black community, particularly since the fifties, has exceedingly important implications for the black movement. You've talked about the recent growth of a new black middle class qualitatively different from the old black petty bourgeoisie. Would you expand on this, and also comment on other aspects of this differentiation as it affects, say, black workers and the growth of a black sub-proletariat, the semi-permanent unemployed?

**MM:** There are a number of important changes in black America's class structure which I think have escaped many black political organizers over the last ten to fifteen years. The black middle class (I don't like the term middle class but I'll use it here) has evolved since the 1870s and '80s and can be characterized in three distinct phases. First, the black middle class after the Civil War was essentially an artisan stratum which provided goods and services primarily to whites. These were the blacks who either were mulattoes or they had been mechanics or larger plantations continuing to provide some goods and services to white patrons. With the 1890s and the turn of the century this stratum was forced out of competition for the white market by a whites only policy.

Enter Booker T. Washington articulating the separate-but-equal economic policy. The genius of Washington was that he understood that in the age of segregation, black capital accumulation could occur only if blacks could manipulate the segregation system, could develop their own funeral parlors, small grocery stores, insurance companies, and even their own black towns. You saw that happening in the 1890s and the turn of the century: in Boley, Oklahoma and Mound Bayou, Mississippi and other places throughout the South. These were all inspired by Booker T. Washington, who represented the methods of an early black capitalist strategy, aligning with the Republican Party nationally, and aligning with the conservative Democrats in the Deep South because there was no Republican Party to speak of. They opposed the Populists, opposed trade unionists, accepted lower wages than white workers, trained blacks for manual education and developed a black petty bourgeois which aligned with white capital. In the short run, this was a policy for political subservience and black middle class capital accumulation.

Then in the fifties and sixties a new generation arose. These black middle-class people were the product of desegregation. Unlike the earlier middle class, their survival did not depend on continued racial segregation be-

cause they were not entrepreneurs per se as much as they were managers and public servants. Their middle-class status came not from capital accumulation within the black community but from their salaries earned working in white corporations. This stratum saw segregation as a barrier to its own class expansion.

Just as this rising middle stratum found Jim Crow absolutely intolerable, so, in a perverse way, did white capitalists from the North. My research on the attitudes of major corporations towards segregation shows that small Southern capital backed segregation to the hilt, but larger businesses, and particularly those headquartered in the North, did not. So, we get the phenomena of a David Rockefeller and a Nelson Rockefeller backing the conservative wing of the Civil Rights movement—the Urban League and the NAACP—because they saw segregation first of all, as an impediment to capital accumulation. They saw that segregation calling for two of everything—bathrooms, entrances, elevators—was an unnecessary and indeed absurd expenditure which cut into profits. This convergence of sectors of northern capital with the more conservative wing of the Civil Rights leadership helped force change within the racist civil society and political apparatus in the Deep South in the fifties and sixties.

But there is a paradox at the end of the story. The paradox is that the logic behind desegregation was a belief that black socioeconomic progress could be achieved with the destruction of all forms of racial segregation. Now there is a truth but there is also a fallacy in that belief—a fallacy which would not become evident until the late 1970s. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund, for example, sued several black colleges for reverse discrimination against white employees on the grounds that black colleges (which were the products of the segregation era) should, if not be liquidated, then at least have the same percentage of white students, faculty and staff as the traditional all-white schools should have blacks. In other words, what was good for the goose was good for the gander. So, many traditionally black schools in the Deep South in the seventies and now in the eighties have been put under tremendous pressure to desegregate by leaders of the old Civil Rights movement. Kentucky State College, which used to be all black, now has 48 percent white students. Tennessee State has now been merged into the larger state university system. Black colleges are literally closing down, or being desegregated, and so the overall number of opportunities that exist for all black students, working class families particularly, since black people are overwhelmingly working class has declined—largely because of politics and policies of the NAACP.

This bizarre and important paradox is an expression of the failure of this black middle class to develop a serious strategy for liberation. But then of course we could always say that the black middle class, because of its objective class position, is not going to go beyond certain bread and butter reforms, ameliorative reforms which do not threaten the system but simply call for the expansion of positions for its own class membership.

**JJ:** But how about the black working class? What changes have gone on within it say, within the last thirty years?

**MM:** At first, by the 1950s you had a very large and expanding black urban proletariat. Black workers since

World War II have been tied to certain key sectors of the macroeconomy. They have been in heavy industry—steel, auto, construction. They're found in the old-line industries in the United States that were developed in the core inner cities and on the periphery of cities in the Northeast and Midwest. Blacks migrated from the rural South to those centers.

By the 1960s there were already signs of contraction within this sector of the national economy, but they did not affect blacks as much as they would at a later decade because of changes in the white working class as well as the black working class. White workers' sons and daughters began to be employed in white-collar businesses and particularly in sectors of the economy that were growing, such as high technology. Blacks began to fill their spaces in old-line industries, so that by the end of the sixties there was a much higher percentage of black workers in old-line industries than in 1945 and '46. With the structural crisis in capitalism in the 1970s, you see a real crisis within the black working class unfold at several levels. You see the old historical pattern of last hired and first fired cutting the economic security out from under the younger black workers. You see a growth of structural unemployment, particularly for younger black workers throughout the Northeast and the Midwest, and generally throughout the country, but not as severe. By the late seventies black unemployment has grown alarmingly. Overall black unemployment by the early eighties rose to 18 percent. Official black youth unemployment skyrocketed from 21 percent in 1960 to 58% today, as of July 1982.

This has produced a stratum within the black political economy of people who I would call the permanent reserve army of labor, who other sociologists term the underclass, the *declassé*, the subproletariat. These are people who have absolutely no prospects of getting a job in a capitalistic economy, especially with the Carter and Reagan cutbacks in job training programs. This group of people who make up approximately a quarter of the black population, live essentially on the margin of despair every day and have to resort increasingly to more desperate measures just to survive. It's probable that, if there's no revolution in this country, a decisive percentage of the black working class will be turned into an underclass or a permanent reserve army of labor.

Now, I do not base my projections of socialism upon the militant upsurge of this subproletariat, because in real life I know that truly desperate people who are without jobs can go in any damn political direction. Often what you find is not a working class consciousness, certainly not a trade union consciousness, but an angry resignation to their economic and social plight which can be turned just as easily against progressive organizations as it can against capitalism. People who have absolutely nothing to lose unfortunately will slash their uncles and their sisters and brothers' throats in order to survive.

**JJ:** I wanted to raise in this connection the whole phenomenon of the feminization of poverty. I worked at a school in Watts last year in which roughly three-quarters of the students lived in single-parent, female-headed households. It seems then that another growing element of this growing reserve army or sub-proletariat is not only black youth but also black women.

**MM:** A very good point. One of the things that disturbs

me about, not simply Reaganism, but the crisis of capitalism since 1972-3, has been the growth of millions of black women within this understratum, within the permanent reserve army of labor.

The percentage of black people who are below the poverty level is now over 31 percent. Something like 31 percent of all black household heads are poor but most of these household heads are not male household heads, but households headed by women. In terms of subproletarian status, black women and children under the age of 18 bear the burden more than adult males. In fact, something in excess of 40 percent of all black women who are either separated or divorced are below the poverty level.

In the 1970s and early '80s black women have not only continued to be the most depressed of any major social group in the United States but even within the black petty bourgeoisie, the percentage of black females compared to black males is actually lower in certain income categories than it was twenty or thirty years ago. Of the blacks in 1979 who earned \$75,000, there were only about 4,000 black males (compared to 550,000 white males) and only 400 black females. This and other data underscore the necessity for black activist organizations to develop a clear commitment to feminism.

**JJ:** In your writing, you give strong support to nationalist, as opposed to integrationist tendencies among black people and you argue that, for the most part, the mass of black people have opted for nationalist solutions. This seems to conflict with the fact that the Civil Rights movement of the fifties, with its mass black working class base, had *integrationist* goals. It appears to me that a "nationalist" characterization of the black community would have different, dramatic implications for developing a black liberation strategy. But before we get into that, I think we need to clear up what could be either a terminological or political disagreement over what each of us means by black nationalism. You seem to speak of black nationalism as synonymous with black power and black pride, whereas I've always made a distinction between, on the one hand, the desire for cohesiveness and identity, and the need for independent black organizations, and on the other hand, the desire for a *separate national* existence which I would call nationalism. I have understood black nationalism as a specific form of political organization and ideology which aims at unifying all black people, *regardless of class*, around a program of building permanent, all-black institutions with the ultimate aim of a separate black political state. Precisely because the nationalists aim at racial separation, they tend to oppose black and white cooperation which is implicit in, say, class struggle strategies. Thus, I never considered the black power movement in the late sixties as being nationalist in this sense. Rather, most militant advocates of black power, such as the Panthers, did *not* put forward a program of black separation, but rather one which while emphasizing group pride and solidarity and organization, aimed at confronting the ruling class in alliance with progressive whites to improve the position of black people within the U.S. For me, the necessary independent organization for such purposes is not black nationalism. (It goes without saying, of course, that if blacks *chose* nationalism, in my use of the term,—i.e., opted for a black state—then revolutionary socialists would defend such a choice as the blacks' right.)

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**MM:** Appearances can be deceiving. First, let's analyze the differences between integration and desegregation. What was the Civil Rights movement about anyway? Was it about integration or desegregation? Virtually every black person—nationalist, integrationist or a hybrid would unite behind the need to smash Jim Crow. The black people I know in the Deep South in the sixties supported Martin Luther King, Jr., not because they viewed King as the representative of integration, but as a fighter against segregation and the Jim Crow system. If you smash Jim Crow, obviously you do not transfer power from one group of people to another. All you do is allow certain numbers of people, in this case millions of black working and poor people, not to be publicly humiliated day in and day out. Also, what you do is allow black people to exercise certain bourgeois democratic rights, that is the vote, and that virtually every nationalist can support. Remember that Malcolm X, just three weeks before he died, gave two of the best speeches of his life in Selma and at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, where he said that he was supporting the Civil Rights movement but he wanted to go beyond that.

I think it would be incorrect to characterize the Civil Rights movement purely and simply as an integrationist movement. I think it would be more correct to describe it as a movement against Jim Crow; that is, a movement for desegregation. Secondly, the majority of black working and poor people, while opposing Jim Crow segregation, would not have supported the destruction of black civil societal institutions, such as black colleges and universities, like so many black leaders of the NAACP and Urban League now propose. They would fight to maintain the existence of black educational institutions and other institutions which were forged by segregation, but they would also call for the end of legal segregation. Now there is no contradiction in that at all.

**JJ:** What then would you regard as the nationalist impulse among black people?

**MM:** My definition of nationalism would include those activists who have been intensely critical of American civil and political society, women and men who have attempted to create some necessary social base to develop their own cultural, political and economic institutions which can be modeled on capitalism or socialism or a hybrid, let's say a cooperative effort. Whereas most black intellectuals and many blacks who come out of the church as leaders have seen segregation as a badge of dishonor, many black working and poor people have tended to be much more sympathetic to race pride, black attempts to develop all-black talents, black schools, black businesses, etc.

**JJ:** What then is your view of black separatism?

**MM:** I would call it black cultural nationalism or narrow nationalism. Cultural nationalists and narrow nationalists are black activists who are basically idealists and not materialists. They define the problem purely as a racial one. They say that the fundamental force that drives the motor of black oppression in this country is race alone. They argue that all whites benefit materially and ideologically from racism which in my view, looking at the data, looking at the facts and experiences of white people is a disastrous misinterpretation of American and black social history. They would insist that any even temporary alliances with whites only leads to failure for blacks. These people develop a political and cultural praxis

which has no basis within the evolution of material reality of civil society or political society. A good example is the cultural nationalist tendency toward developing cultural festivities which are rooted specifically in the African continent. Now, while I have the greatest respect for the traditions, politics, and the image of Africa, beyond that I would have to say that the political dynamics of liberation struggles in Southern Africa have nothing *directly* to do with political struggles in this country. Some narrow nationalists understand the dynamics of Zimbabwe better than they do the South Side of Chicago, and that's a disaster.

**JJ:** You mentioned Malcolm X's speeches before. In the last year of his life, Malcolm rejected the narrow nationalism of the Muslims manifested in their reluctance to participate and support the movement for desegregation. Wouldn't you say that narrow nationalists tend to be less than enthusiastic about engaging in confrontations with the system which, if successful, would ameliorate the system to a certain extent, because they don't believe and don't want other black people to believe that racial equality is possible, or even desirable?

**MM:** Well, I think that the transformation of Malcolm was essentially a rejection of the ideological straight-jacket the Elijah put on his members, but also a recognition that overt political struggle to defend the interests of black people was essential in order to obtain the economic and political goals that Malcolm had set for blacks and that a revolutionary nationalist could not simply be satisfied with building all black institutions within a strictly segregated society. He recognized that one could call for a separate all-black political organization such as the Organization of Afro-American Unity but one which works in conjunction with multi-racial, multi-national formations against segregation, to fight against economic and political exploitation.

**JJ:** What you are saying now about narrow nationalism would appear to contradict the last chapter of *Blackwater*, which argues for a *separate black state* after the socialist revolution. Since we would probably both agree that a socialist revolution is not possible in this country without a significant overcoming of the racial and sexual divisions within the working class, it puzzles me why you would feel the necessity for a black separate existence.

**MM:** I would differ somewhat with my position in 1979. Over three years ago, the basic thesis of that chapter of *Blackwater* was that racism as a structure within the political economy and civil and political society was directly linked to capitalism, but that with the destruction of the capitalist mode of production, racism would *not ipso facto* disappear. So that when a socialist revolution occurred, black working class people would come up with models that a lot of black and white leftists would not agree with. They would say we oppose this because it conflicts with our plan for what you folks ought to have.

I would say, bullshit. The social stratum who have been historically exploited or oppressed have a legitimate historical right to come up with certain social, political and cultural structures which should be defended and supported by the socialist state.

**JJ:** I would certainly agree with that.

**MM:** If a group of black people say they want to split and go back to Africa and want to be subsidized to do so, the

socialist state has an historical obligation to do that. The same thing is true obviously for struggles against patriarchy. There will have to be institutional structures that fight against the implicit or explicit sexism of black and white and Latino males against all women.

Now as to the specific character of those structures, all of that is just speculation. With the process of socialist revolution, that is, a genuine practice of racial equality in terms of the struggle of working people, then the purely separatist structure that I suggested in *Blackwater* would not have to exist at all.

**JJ:** All of this, of course, raises the general question of a black liberation strategy. Given the class differentiation within the black community that we've talked about, what prospects do you see for building a black movement which cuts across class lines, and what do you see as the possibility for building a specifically black working class current? Also, how would these movements relate to the overall struggle for socialism in the U.S.?

**MM:** In the last two years I've reached the conclusion that no viable black unity is indeed possible unless the unity is based clearly on the perception that an anti-racist politics must also be clearly anti-capitalist, and by anti-capitalist I mean something broader than socialist. I mean a politics that calls programmatically for severe constraints on the right of capital to move in the American political economy, constraints upon capital regarding plant closings, pressures placed on the American government for expanded and much more meaningful job training programs, pressures placed upon the political apparatus for meaningful employment.

It's upon that foundation which I would define as anti-capitalist, that black socialists have to develop programmatic unity with black working people. I think the road to black liberation must also be a road to socialist revolution. Now how do we bring that about? I think we have to develop political organizations that are grounded within the black working class experience and black working class cultural life. We have to address the concrete issues which affect working class poor black people.

We have to, I believe, develop our political organizations that fight for the rights of blacks within trade unions, through black caucuses, etc. Unlike a lot of other black leftists, I don't have a dual unionist strategy. We have to mobilize workers in unions; we have to develop a unity between black and white workers that is forged through *practical* struggle. And we have to mobilize black working people in their communities around community-oriented concerns. We have to fight against corporate give-backs in the form of tax incentives given corporations, and free enterprise zone-type schemes to rip off the black working class public. And I think that we have to place socialism on the agenda not as some mystical vision but as a concrete necessity for the black working class, not simply to live better but for segments of that class to survive. We must develop a transitional program strategy calling for black workers combined with white workers to control greater and greater aspects of the productive process.

**JJ:** Where does the trade union bureaucracy or the black elite fit into this strategic outlook? Would they build such a movement?

**MM:** Certainly the trade union bureaucracy is an impediment to meaningful black-white worker unity. Apparently they haven't built such movements, so I would

doubt that they would transform their own history at this stage.

**JJ:** Another question about your strategy. Wouldn't a movement to limit the prerogatives of capital run so directly counter to the capitalist crisis, to the capitalists' need to shore up profits, that it would have a tremendous explosive potential? After all, this is not the fifties or sixties, when the capitalist system was infinitely more able to grant reforms, and even then, not the kind of structural reforms you are talking about.

**MM:** I am calling for a program that will include a variety of legislative changes and reforms which are generally related to the mode of production but not necessarily. These would include issues within cultural and social relations such as abortion rights or the Equal Rights Amendment, anti-discrimination legislation against gays and lesbians, attacking the construction of nuclear power plants, calling for universal health care, affirmative action, etc. Now these kinds of legislative reforms can be won within capitalism. Winning these reforms will not create a socialist society. But what the transitional program can achieve is I think first winning over proletarian sections of the coercive apparatus of the state, such as a working class volunteers in the armed forces, and it can also create, hopefully, the social and material foundations for a logical alternative to bourgeois authority and hegemony. Now the base of what Gramsci would term a historic bloc or revolutionary social bloc must always be viewed as the working class. I have to emphasize this because social democrats tend to view elements of the petty bourgeoisie as decisive, or the see the necessity for calling for certain types of reforms which do not immediately or profoundly effect or evoke such strong support within the working class.

For me, the critical distinction between social democracy and revolutionary socialism is this question of a *social rupture*. Is it possible to build socialism through peaceful means in terms of the long run? I don't think it is. If you talk with my grandmother, she would tell you that the rednecks down in Mississippi and Alabama where she comes from didn't cough up anything to black workers without some form of struggle. One time my great-grandfather had to pull out a revolver in 1901 after they passed the disenfranchisement constitution in the state of Alabama which prohibited him from voting. It's the same kind of dynamic at a micro level.

I can't see the corporations willingly turning over the keys to the factory to the working class. So I think that if we succeed in developing a structure, not just a coalition or popular front, but a historical social bloc of divergent forces who come together around a clearly anti-sexist, uncompromisingly anti-racist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist program, then we can develop the basis for socialism in the country in the '80s and in the early 90s.

**JJ:** In building this social bloc, what role do you give to a black political party? Do you see such a formation as really capable of breaking the mass of black people far from the Democratic Party? Does the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP) have such a potential?

**MM:** To answer your question, it's very important to cover the history of the idea of an independent black political party. The idea of a black political party is very, very old. It first appeared back about 80 or 90 years ago in the 1880s with the development of several attempts at forg-

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ing such a party at a state and local level. Back in 1897 a black man ran for governor of Ohio and pulled 5000 votes on the Independent Black Party. Back in 1916 Dubois came out in favor of developing an independent black electoral political party. And since 1916, there has been a series of attempts. The last attempt since the recent period was the Freedom Now Party which was formed in the early '60s and ran candidates in New York and Michigan, polling about 2% of the gubernatorial vote of 1964. Since then, at the 1972 Gary convention, there was a call to develop a National Black Political Assembly which we termed a pre-party formation. This would supposedly be a party of all black people. But in practice we knew that it was a very uneasy coalition of different interests and forces. The black elected officials (who we called the BEO's) split from NBPA by '74 and '75 with the emergence of Imanu Baraka and a clear revolutionary internationalist and Marxist let that crystalized by the end of '74. Now Baraka in turn departed from the organization at the end of '75, so that by '77 the NBPA had no more than about 390 or 400 activists throughout the country and in only about five or six states. Most of them were black nationalists, a few cultural nationalists, many community organizers, but that was about it.

When the call for NBIPP came over two years ago, it was clear on the part of a number of organizers that what was needed was not an electoral party but a party that involved itself in electoral and nonelectoral work. The resolution that passed at the New Orleans convention was for a nation-building, community-building party devoted to the infrastructural, organizational and institutional development of the black community, building community schools, lobbying around community issues, and engaging in electoral politics. Now, at the Chicago convention of NBIPP back in August of 1981, it was decided that NBIPP would not become involved in electoral work until early 1983. What we wanted to do was to broaden the definition of politics to include political struggles of a variety of types. And I think NBIPP was somewhat successful in a number of cities for doing that.

What remains to be seen, however, is whether a political organization as broadly diverse in its constituency as NBIPP is able to develop an electoral program, not strategy, but program that is clearly, concretely anti-capitalist. The positive thing about NBIPP was its platform and its constitution or charter. It says that it is committed to fighting against racism, sexism, imperialism and capitalism. But nobody who helped to build NBIPP believes that NBIPP in and of itself is the vanguard for that social process, so that other progressive black nationalist and radical formations that exist in the black community that are also anti-capitalist, that are also anti-sexist, must be involved in that process. I don't believe that we can join the NAACP and transform that organization to be the vehicle for anti-capitalist struggles. We have to develop a program that is clearly in the interests of black working people and fight for that program through the coming together of existing political agencies that currently operate within the black community.

**JJ:** What are your views on that strategy? Some social democratic organizations favor forming a left wing within the Democratic Party to reform it; others say that

the Democratic Party cannot be reformed and that supporting Democratic candidates is a mistake; and still others wouldn't work within the party but would at times support Democratic candidates.

**MM:** Most black elected officials would in Europe essentially be social democrats of one type or another. In this country because of the absence of a clear socialist discourse, you have these people in the Democratic party. So in the process of developing an independent socialist strategy toward the Democratic Party you have a conjuncture of several problems.

First, since the Great Depression, black people have voted for what essentially are social democratic candidates who run overwhelmingly in the Democratic Party. Problem two: the process of electoral politics, at least in this country, as it impacts upon race relations, means that most of the black elected officials are pretty tolerable. True, they can't do a hell of a whole lot for the black community, except in some modest and miniscule ways in goods and services. So, as a rule, based upon the relationship of the Democratic Party and the powerlessness of black elected officials who are elected by the Democratic Party, I would not support any kind of energy or time or allocation of resources to whites or blacks being elected in the political apparatus on the basis of their membership in the Democratic Party.

The American state apparatus is capitalist and racist in its operations and trajectory, but it also manifests certain class contradictions and struggles which are always present within bourgeois civil society as a whole. The state bureaucracy under bourgeois democracy can accommodate certain demands made by progressive blacks, trade unions or the left in a public policy. Progressives can have a direct impact on public policy and the behavior of the bourgeois democratic state in certain respects, either through electoral participation or through civil disobedience, or mass demonstrations, etc. So, progressives can gain positions within the state, particularly at municipal and local levels, on independent slates which can fund or support some grassroots interests and indirectly it's in the development of a potential socialist majority. So I would say that the critical support for clearly progressive or anti-capitalist politicians, such as Ron Dellums, running within the Democratic Party, at the present time, may be a necessary or a constructive activity building an anti-corporate consensus within the working class. However, and I would underline this, to view either major capitalist party as the *primary* or the *principal* or *fundamental terrain* for building socialism is simply to *court disaster*. In my judgment, the Democratic Party is never going to be transformed into an appropriate vehicle for achieving the political hegemony of blacks, or Latinos or the working class. This will require the creation of a clearly unambiguous anti-capitalist, anti-sexist political formation which represents the interests of working and poor people. And that will not be the Democratic Party, unless that party is split. I would argue very strongly that people who are my friends and allies in DSA who view their socialist politics as being articulated as a left wing of the Democratic Party are incorrect, in the short-run and the long-run.

**JJ:** I have to say then that your membership in DSA puzzles me, since it appears to me that your political outlook is very different from DSA's, in particular, its notion of a peaceful road to socialism and its support of

working within the Democratic Party and through the labor bureaucracy.

**MM:** I think first of all a lot of Leftists incorrectly assume that Harrington represents what the members of DSA think and that's just not true. Or that the statements of people who are very prominent in DSA represent what all people in DSA think such as, let's say, Wimpy Winpisinger. Now, Mike Harrington and I would agree that there is a real need for a broad-based pluralist socialist movement in this country. That's what I joined DSA for and I still support DSA. The reason I agreed to become a vice chair of the organization was because the United States is so politically backward that it does not even have a massive or major national organization that is clearly committed to some definition of socialism that working people and people throughout the country generally can identify and see.

Secondly, Harrington and I would agree that it is important to support progressive candidates who run as Democrats and the people that I give as an example are pretty obvious: John Conyers, Ron Dellums, Julian Bond and so forth. But beyond that there are obviously political differences. Some people in DSA would see the Democratic Party as being the sole vehicle for articulating socialism. There are a number of other people who don't share that view.

Then there is another point: of how socialism is to be won. Some people on the left, Marxists and others, would argue that what is required is the vanguard party formation taking the vanguard model of Lenin, to make a revolution. I would argue, with Gramsci, that the terrain of political struggle between the West and the East is different, that in the East what you have is a Marxist state apparatus in a very diminutive civil society. In this country what you have is a very massive civil society and the state apparatus that at certain stages is less influential than the cultural element. Cracking the hegemony of capitalism becomes all important in the West—developing a strategy that can reach the churches and the schools, that can get into the work place and hit the media, that can do the kind of cultural and educational work that is essential for developing a counter-hegemonic position for socialism. Now we can't do that until socialism at least is discussed publicly as a serious alternative. You are right that there are different forces within DSA that have a very different view of the long term. But we're not talking about long-term politics here. What I'm looking at primarily is what has to be done right now. Whether or not my definition emerges as a clear, broad majoritarian force within this specific political organization will only be determined by struggle.

**JJ:** What were you going to say about the vanguard party?

**MM:** I think it's an open question that in practice what we have seen in the West since World War II is the political process where in it's questionable whether a Leninist vanguard-type party forged out of a particular historical experience, and I want to emphasize this, forged out of a particular struggle against Czarist Russia in 1917, is suitable concretely to the terrain of the West in the 1980s.

**JJ:** I would agree with you that a war of position is critical to undermine capitalist ideological and cultural hegemony within advanced capitalism, but I would think that a

revolutionary party would still be necessary to wage the war of position as well as war of maneuver. It would seem that a party of clearly revolutionary, committed activists, engaged in democratic decision-making, collective activity and collectively responsible for one another, would have the capacity to articulate clear socialist goals, strategies, and tactics, including building the mass organizations and institutions of popular, revolutionary power. Of course, I'm not talking about the little bureaucratic monstrosities of today's sects, but of a truly democratic and revolutionary activist organization. This is one of my difficulties with organizations like DSA; they are so loose and "pluralist" that there is no common political basis for action. Nor can the rank and file exert real democratic control over the group because there is no activist basis of membership, much less collective responsibility.

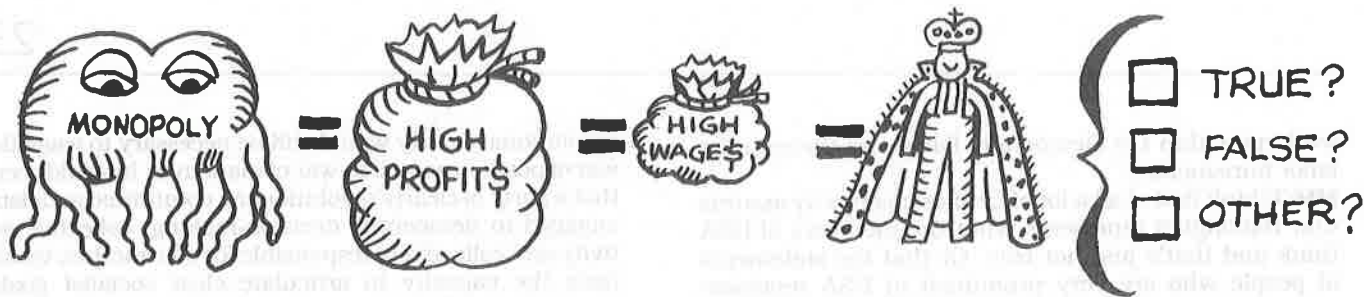
**MM:** Well, I think that you're raising a number of valid points. Historically I think that the Left seriously has to reassess what the practice has been of Leninist vanguard-type political formations in the West since the 1930s and that's why for me this is a serious question, and it's an open question.

I'm just not convinced, at least as of now, that the vanguard model is the correct model in the West. A lot of the evidence that I get is from looking at vanguard models, and I don't mean just Stalinist formations, but Trotskyist and Maoist-type formations as well.

**JJ:** I would agree with you that all these formations are poor models, but not because they are revolutionary activist organizations. I think the problem stems from the "vanguardism" or "partyism," with its elitist notion that the party decides for the working class and therefore that all decisions flow downward and outward from the party leadership to the party membership to the working class. So, the only choice that leftists seem to have are between hard, bureaucratic sects or loose social democratic-type organizations, neither of which can lead a revolution. So I think what has to be done is to build revolutionary socialist organizations which not only tolerate but encourage the expression of political differences, democratically develop the groups' goals and strategies, and exercise collective discipline which makes effective action possible.

**MM:** In general we're not very far apart at all. I mean I agree with you that the historic problem of all Social Democratic formations has been the unevenness of ideological development of cadre, or no cadre; rather the unevenness of what political responsibilities are, a free floating fringe that becomes a mass sector of the organization. Things like that that undermine the ability to coordinate any meaningful program. On the other hand what I find is utterly repugnant on the left is the strait-jacketing mentality and political structures of many of these organizations. That's the reservation I have of how one characterizes a vanguard party.

If what we mean is an organization that stifles legitimate dissent, that is fairly inflexible and intolerant toward, say, a woman's or a lesbian or a black caucus, and would put forward a line from the top-down simply because the Politburo put it forward, whether or not it has any relationship to the concrete reality of a community where an organizer was, then that kind of party I see as a legitimate disaster. I would want to keep away from it ■



# THE THEORY OF THE LABOR ARISTOCRACY

by Sam Friedman

**T**he lack of a significant core of socialist workers and the overwhelming strength of lukewarm reformism within the working class must be the starting point for any socialist perspective today. We need to understand this political reality if we are to develop strategies for helping to create a radical workers movement. The theory of the labor aristocracy is one approach to this problem which is widely

held on the left and which has recently been restated by the journal *Line of March* (Elbaum and Seltzer 1982a, 1982b, 1983; Peters 1981).\*

The labor aristocracy theory is worth examining because it is a serious (if mistaken) attempt to avoid the traditional trap of equating economic militancy with political radicalism. As such, the theory is winning support among radicals-who-have-become-worker-activists and could in the future become a key concept for the small working class left... with disastrous results. Indeed, the theory's appeal is likely to grow because several of its central ideas—its emphasis on a "political" as opposed to an "economist" approach to labor and its critique of the rank and file approach—are already shared in one form or another by widely disparate political thinkers and groups on the left.

Thus, despite obvious differences between a communist grouplet like *Line of March* and a social democratic organization like DSA, these groups have a surprising number of fundamental ideas in common. For example, both orient to "political" union leaders rather than "economistic" rank and file activists and both hold a vision of "politics" (discussed below) which systematically divides off the "political" from the "economic," rather than understanding their interconnect-edness. Therefore, both end up proposing strategies which make their own goal of politicizing the working class impossible.

This essay will explain the labor aristocracy theory; present a critique of its economic foundations and its perception of working class consciousness and politics; and demonstrate that the theory's approach is not only mistaken but leads to disastrous strategic conclusions. I end with a discussion of building rank and file movements as an alternative strategy and with some ideas about how the left can help radicalize these movements.

## I. WHAT IS THE THEORY OF THE LABOR ARISTOCRACY?

Let us start with what labor aristocracy theory is *not*. It is not simply a theory that there are large differences in wages and life conditions among workers, and that

whites and males tend to be at the top in these divisions. No one denies this. The labor aristocracy theory says much more. It can be summarized as holding that:

1. Monopoly capitalism leads to superprofits. Companies in overseas investment and trade or in the arms industries, and companies with considerable monopoly power in the domestic economy, make a higher rate of profit than other companies. The superprofits of imperialism undergird a general prosperity and allow the avoidance of economic crisis in imperialist countries.
2. The extra profits that these corporations earn let them pay higher wages to their own employees. In addition, these superprofits and their associated prosperity let companies and governments provide social and cultural programs such as education and retirement funds.
3. The capitalist class uses higher wages and social programs as a bribe to win over an important layer of the working class. These recipients of higher wages and benefits form a labor aristocracy, and as a result follow opportunist politics.
4. The labor aristocracy's real interests in "the deal" with capital puts them in conflict with the interests of other workers—as when aristocrats seek higher wages for themselves without regard to their inflationary consequences. More generally, the labor aristocracy has a real material interest in imperialism, sexism, and racism, which leads it to oppose internationalism, environmentalism, and the demands of the oppressed.
5. The lower strata of the working class, relatively unaffected by the bribe, are less opportunist and more revolutionary. However, the labor aristocracy, as the best organized and most visible section of the working class, has considerable ideological influence and thus pulls the lower strata in an opportunist direction. One way in which this happens is that white aristocrats find many

\*References to published works are given by authors' names within the text. The full citation is given in the Reference list at the end of the article.



lower strata whites willing to oppose struggles against racism.

6. The bribe comes to many workers through the mechanism of trade unions. This provides a material basis for a trade union bureaucracy which expresses an opportunist politics that centers around the defense of the bribe. Thus, union bureaucracy is, we are told, an aspect of labor aristocracy, and differences between union members and union officials are of secondary importance when compared to their common interest in the aristocracy's privileges.
7. The composition of the labor aristocracy varies historically with changes in the economy and in degrees of political mobilization. *Line of March* defines it as follows: "While this privileged stratum tends to be concentrated in certain sections of the class—skilled workers, unionized production workers, public employees, and "proletarianized" professionals (teachers, skilled health care workers, technicians, engineers, etc.)—the labor aristocracy cannot be reduced to an occupational profile." (Elbaum and Seltzer 1982b: 90–91.) Whites and males are more likely to be in the aristocracy than oppressed races or women.

On the basis of this theory, Elbaum and Seltzer see American labor history since World War II as the working-out of labor aristocratic opportunism. Opportunists drove opponents of American imperialism out of the labor movement in the late 1940s.\* Since then, they have upheld a pro-imperialist, racist politics. But while the aristocracy has held pro-imperialist, racist politics since then, they argue, the rest of the working class has been involved in movements against racism and the Vietnam War. They see much of the mass base of the Civil Rights Movement as having been in these other strata of the working class. But, they say, these anti-war and anti-racist movements *within* the unions were rooted in movements outside the unions. They point to white schoolteachers in New York striking against black demands for community control and to "hard hats" beating up anti-war demonstrators as evidence that the labor aristocracy opposed the movements.

According to *Line of March*, the aristocracy's opportunism takes three main political forms: (1) Collaboration with imperial foreign policy; (2) Support of existing stratification within the working class, particularly white supremacy (3) Tying labor to the Democratic Party and suppressing socialist tendencies among workers.

What political conclusions are drawn from this analysis? What does it imply for left practice? *First*, it implies that we should emphasize organizing outside of the aristocracy and focus on the lower strata whose interests presumably directly incline them to be more

\*They do not seem to understand that the foundations for the defeat of the left had been laid in the wartime alliance among labor officials, Socialist and Communist Party union members, and the bourgeoisie in behalf of the war effort. This weakened the unions, crystalized a labor bureaucracy, and counterposed Communist Party members to shop floor militancy. See Brecher 1976: ch. 6; Glaberman 1980; Howe and Widick 1948: ch. 5; Preis 1964: Part III: *Radical America* 1975; Seidman 1953; Weir 1973: 169–172.

radical. To the extent that we work among aristocratic workers, we should emphasize organizing the unorganized and putting aside "selfish" demands in favor of supporting the unorganized. *Second*, those labor officials who speak out against opportunist politics, particularly those who express opposition to racism and imperialism, should receive our full support. *Third*, rank and file movement-building should be downplayed among *all* strata of workers. It is *unnecessary* among unions that exist or form in the lower strata because there is no material basis (bribe) on which a bureaucracy with interests hostile to the workers can develop; nor is it necessary among the aristocracy, because both the workers and the union officials share an interest in the bribe. *Fourth*, within the working class the main enemy is opportunism. This must be attacked *politically* rather than "economistically." The widespread left practice of fully supporting economic demands of the labor aristocracy is therefore mistaken, since these demands fail to challenge (and usually support) aristocratic privilege and thus maintain the divisions between aristocracy and lower strata.

## II. ECONOMICS AND THE LABOR ARISTOCRACY THEORY

We will start by seeing whether the indicated economic connections hold true. Then, we will see whether the political expectations for the theory are true or not.

### A. Imperial and Monopoly Superprofits

Let us assume that monopolies get superprofits and imperialism allows firms with heavy involvement in overseas investment and trade to earn superprofits. Then, if we compare industries we should find that profit rates are higher in industries with higher degrees of monopoly and imperial involvement—not only higher, but sufficiently higher to have a serious political effect. However, if we look at the evidence, we find that: (1) Over the economy as a whole, less than 7% of the variation in profits among industries is due to monopoly or imperial involvement.\* (2) Economic concentration and foreign involvement of industries are not related to industry profitability. For example, printing and publishing have *low* concentration and motor freight has both *low* foreign involvement and *low* concentration. But *both* have been highly profitable industries. On the other hand, steel and auto are concen-

\*Statistically, this is done using correlational analysis. Tolbert, Horan, and Beck (1980) find that the 4-firm concentration ratios (which give the percent of total sales in an industry accounted for by its top four firms) of 55 industries are only correlated .22 with mean profits of business units in those industries. Hodson (private communication) finds that profits (as a percent of sales) are correlated .26 with a measure of foreign investment and trade involvement and .20 with a measure of concentration in sales, assets, and employment. To interpret this, the size of a relationship is based on the square of the correlation coefficient, so that none of these correlations implies that even seven percent of the variance in profits among industries is due to monopoly or imperial involvement.

## Against the Current

trated industries with international firms—but have had low profits for a decade. Similarly, a “monopolistic” industry which is *not* declining—airlines—also has had low profits.

Clearly, space does not permit a full treatment of this much-debated subject. But socialist economists—both social democratic and revolutionary—are increasingly coming to the conclusion that the degree of monopoly and its impact have been overstated (Gordon, Bowles, and Weisskopf 1983: 51–53; Willi Semmler, *Competition, Monopoly & Profit Rates*, in URPE, vol. 13, Winter '82; Zeluck, 1980.

### B. Does the Labor Aristocracy Gain Disproportionately from Monopoly and Imperialism?

Similarly, if the theory is true, we would expect monopoly, imperial, high profit industries to have high wages and entrenched unions. Once again, if we compare industries, we find that the predicted result does not hold, and that neither unionization nor earnings is related to profits, monopoly, or imperial involvement.\* For example, wages are low in cigarette production and in instrument manufacturing in spite of high profit rates and concentrations. And such profitable monopolies as R.J. Reynolds, IBM and Texas Instruments are non-union. Also, contrary to the labor aristocracy theory, wages in the U.S. construction industry are high. This industry is competitive, unconcentrated, and only recently involved with imperial investment. But the fact that European construction workers are among the lowest paid is clear evidence that wage differences are shaped by past or present class struggle, shortage of skilled workers, workplace culture, and the degree of racism and sexism far more than by the degree of monopoly or imperial involvement of the industry.

Labor aristocracy theory also implies that prosperity benefits the labor aristocracy more than the lower strata of the working class. That is, imperialism and monopoly produce superprofits and sustain an economic prosperity that lets capital bribe the aristocrats and other workers (to a lesser degree). But *does* prosperity benefit aristocrats more than other workers? On

\*Once again, statistical evidence challenges the labor aristocracy theory. Thus, Hodson (private communication) found correlations with union membership of .25 (foreign involvement), .25 (concentration), and .10 (profits), the determinants of earnings have been widely studied, as is reviewed at length in Hodson and Kaufman (1982) and Friedman (1983). Hodson (1981) conducted a sophisticated regression analysis and found that concentration was actually negatively related to earnings and foreign involvement positively related, but in each case the size of the relationship is small. Dreier and Szymanski (1980) studied whether repatriated profits from investments in the Third World, shipments to the military, or exports to the Third World were related to the earnings of operatives in an industry; the earnings of craftworkers; the percentage in unions; or the ratio of craft to operative earnings. They found that neither profits from foreign investments nor sales to the military (nor, from their tables, degree of monopolization) was related to any of these indicators of labor aristocracy-style bribe. Industries with greater exports to the Third World were somewhat more likely to pay operatives more but also had lower ratios of craft to operative income.

its face, this seems unlikely. One would expect that the lowest strata, as the “last hired, first fired,” would gain most from prosperity. It is economic boom periods that offer the most regular (or most frequent) employment to members of the labor reserve, and the prospects for lower strata workers getting “aristocratic” jobs are greater when demand is high. But on behalf of the aristocracy thesis, it can also be argued that boom periods give the aristocracy more clout to obtain what it wants.

One way to evaluate these conflicting arguments is to look at data about how different groups of workers fared during the long postwar boom. First, let us look at industry data. The statistics in Table 1 are at best mildly supportive of the claim that the labor aristocracy gains more than the lower strata during prosperity.

Workers in construction clearly did best, but workers in mining and durable goods manufacturing (most of whom are in the “aristocracy”) improved their pay little more than did workers in wholesale trade, nondurable manufacturing, or services (most of whom are not). Even in retail trade—clearly at the bottom—weekly earnings went up 156% during the period 1947–1971, which is not that much worse than mining’s 186% or durable manufacturing’s 190%. Of course, retail pay was lower to start with, so in absolute or dollar terms the retail worker fell further behind. However, even retail workers’ earnings increased considerably faster than prices, which rose only 81% during the entire period.

Industry data are not conclusive since they aggregate huge numbers of workers in different situations. Let us then look at the question in different terms. How did racial minorities and women fare relative to whites and men? The data are mixed in their implications (see Tables 2 and 3). On the one hand, the *unemployment* rates of minority men, minority women, and white women, as compared to white men, all got worse during the long period of prosperity (as indicated by figures for 1948 and 1971). Unemployment rates, however, have problems as indicators because they depend upon how many people of a given category *seek work* (a number which has increased, especially among women, black & white) as well as upon the number of jobs available. On the other hand, the *family* incomes of minorities actually improved relative to those of whites during the long boom (see Table 3). Family income data reflect all the myriad causes that determine a family’s income, but are less than ideal because they concern only *family* income and thus omit individuals not living in families.\*

What happens when economic conditions enter a crisis? Table 2 indicates that unemployment improved for white women and (slightly) for minority women between 1971 and 1980 as compared to white men. For minority men it got worse. The ratio for family incomes remained constant from 1970 to 1978 with minorities getting 64% of what whites got. This evidence

\*One final problem with Tables 2 and 3 should be mentioned. They present information for people regardless of social class. This means that data for petty bourgeoisie (including farmers) and managers and capitalists are included as well as workers.

then is also mixed. Impressionistic evidence indicates that minorities and white women tend to be the first ones laid off, but our impressions may reflect only what is happening in "aristocratic" jobs. Of course, the Reagan administration is certainly doing what it can to make the non-aristocrats in the working class suffer as much as or more than the labor aristocracy.

In summary, there is no clear pattern of the labor aristocracy doing better than the lower strata during the postwar period of prosperity (or decline). Tony Cliff got similar results for Britain, and, on that basis argued that capitalism's boom benefited the *entire* working class rather than just its top strata.

Given the importance of a correct understanding of racism and sexism to building a successful movement, I want to make sure I am not misunderstood. Stratification does exist in the working class, and is a major obstacle to class unity. This stratification is not, however, based on a "bribe" derived from monopoly superprofits. It is based on oppression by the bourgeoisie which gives a material base to racist and sexist views and fears among workers (particularly whites and males, but even the victims of oppression often accept some aspects of these approaches). This racism and sexism allow capital to turn workers against each other (often without direct intervention by employers). Other stratification also exists, such as by age and ethnicity, but is less central to maintaining bourgeois rule.

### C. The Material Roots of Reformism

So far, I have shown (1) that profits are similar regardless of imperial involvement or monopoly; (2) that wages and unionization are unrelated to imperial involvement, monopoly status, or the profitability of industries; and (3) that the aristocracy and the lower strata fare similarly in times of prosperity and decline. What does this tell us about the material basis for reformism? It means that reformism cannot be tied to a "labor aristocracy" which particularly benefits from imperialism.

What, then, *did* allow reformism to become hegemonic among workers in America, Western Europe, and Japan during the postwar period? The decisive consideration, of course, is the massive increase in capitalist production and the resulting massive increase in real income that Table 1 documents.\*

Needless to say, capitalist prosperity did not automatically increase workers' living standards. Workers got more because they struggled for it. However, the boom made it easier to win gains by reducing the reserve army of unemployed. Also, since production and productivity were growing rapidly, capitalists could afford to grant concessions in wages and in government social programs without jeopardizing their economic stability. Indeed, it made sense to allow workers gains in order to prevent disruption of production and to win their political support.

Under these circumstances, opportunism had favorable grounds to grow in *all* strata. Reformist ideology

\*I do not discuss the economics of the boom or of the current crisis. To do so would take many pages and would detract from the focus of this paper: The fallacy of labor aristocracy theory's seeing a difference between aristocrat's and lower strata workers' economic situations and political tendencies.

understands workers political strategy as a matter of fighting for a *fair share* within capitalism. Taking the system for granted, it assumes that the pie will grow and concludes that it makes sense for workers (and other social groups) to accept the system and to struggle within it for their just desserts. Workers should acquiesce in workplace discipline and in capitalist control of production decisions, so that productivity can be increased. They can expect to receive, in return, a rising standard of living. Because the post-war period *actually did* allow for a steady improvement in workers' economic situation, the reformist vision seemed a reasonable one to many workers.

Of course, this does not mean that workers automatically accept reformism whenever there is prosperity and the chance for a reformist tradeoff. There was, for example, a rapid radicalization of French workers in 1968, and Italian workers in 1969-70, *before* the end of the boom. However, the existence of a boom does make a reformist outlook more possible. To the extent that more radical alternatives were out of the question in the US—especially because of the previous defeats of the left during World War II and the Cold War repression—accepting an opportunist approach seemed both necessary and fruitful. The labor bureaucracies of Europe, the U.S., Australia, and Japan, centered in the trade unions and reformist social democratic and labor parties could get across their message because they could *deliver the goods* to the entire working class, not just its top layers. Sometimes this required mass mobilization from below, as in the Black struggles of the 1960s. But prosperity allowed reformists to incorporate the main part of the movement into the system by adroitly combining concessions with the repression of those who became too radical.

## III. POLITICS OF THE LABOR ARISTOCRACY

The crux of the labor aristocracy thesis is its claim that the lower strata are more radical, and in crises more revolutionary, than the labor aristocracy. If this were true, then economic errors of the theory would be of secondary interest (although we would need to find a better *explanation* of the political divergence). On the other hand, if the lower strata and the aristocracy do not behave politically as theory predicts, then the theory collapses. In this section, I will argue that *the labor aristocracy is no less revolutionary than the lower strata*; and that *the lower strata are no less reformist than the aristocracy*. If I am correct, then the labor aristocracy theory is misleading and harmful.

### A. The Social Basis of Workers Revolution in the Time of Lenin

Proponents of the labor aristocracy theory base themselves on Lenin's argument that the labor aristocracy constituted the basis for opportunism during the First World War and the implicit claim that the lower strata provided the basis for the postwar revolutionary upsurge. However, Lenin was wrong (and did not use this formulation after the war). Both labor aristocrats and workers from the lower strata were involved in both opportunism and the post-war revolutionary

movements. I will concentrate on the revolutionary role of the aristocracy in the post WWI period. I do not do this to slight in any way the revolutionary role of the lower strata. The example of the East London revolutionary feminist socialists, for instance, is one that should be studied, not ignored. But here we must restrict ourselves to evidence that the aristocracy was revolutionary as well.

In country after country, workers in strongly unionized, "aristocratic" industries (Cronin 1980: 135-36) led the leftward surge which ended World War I, almost led to revolution across the European continent, and formed the basis for the construction of the Communist Parties. By and large, these radical political struggles emerged from rank and file movements which initially only fought their employers over conditions and aimed to transform their bureaucratized unions. They failed to create successful revolutions, in part, because they were unable to develop a sufficient political organization to concretize and expand their thrust towards power. In Britain, skilled metal workers in Glasgow, Sheffield, and elsewhere organized a powerful national shop stewards' movement that struck over both economic issues and political issues like military conscription. Miners organized a rank and file movement as part of their effort to defend themselves against wartime industrial discipline and economic hardship. And their struggles led to a significant mobilization around revolutionary politics. (Dewar 1976; Hinton and Hyman 1975; Kendall 1969; Milton 1973; and Pelling 1958 discuss the British movement.) In France, the metal workers of Paris, railroad workers, and the building trades were at the heart of the left wing of the union movement. They were involved in numerous political strikes and rank and file efforts and were an important part of the movements to revolutionize the French left. (See Cole 1958; Ch. 13; Lorwin 1954.) Similarly revolutionary movements of metal workers against employers and bureaucrats constituted the basis of the revolutionary anti-war shop stewards' movement in Germany and the revolutionary upsurge in Turin, Italy. (See Fischer 1948; Moore 1978—particularly 287-88; Netti 1969; Spriano 1964; Williams 1975.) In sum, what *Line of March* calls the "labor aristocracy" of Europe was at the very core of the post-World War I revolutionary upsurge.

Furthermore we should understand that the "aristocracy" has, throughout the history of the working class movement, been a part of the vanguard of radical political struggle. The post-World War II revolutionary episodes in Europe in France (1968), Italy (1969-70), and Portugal (1975), not to speak of Hungary (1956) and Poland, or the workers' movements in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, all followed the same pattern.

### B. Workers Politics and the Labor Aristocracy Today

Elbaum and Seltzer claim that the labor aristocracy failed to take part in civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s, and that aristocrats were actually hostile to these movements. As evidence, they point to the racist New York teachers' strike and to hard-hat attacks on anti-war demonstrators. However, both the

National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers (*before* Shanker's hegemony) were in the forefront of civil rights activity. Furthermore, many other teachers, social workers, and other "proletarianized petty bourgeois labor aristocrats" were extremely active in all the movements of the 1960s (and since). Nor should the claim that the labor aristocracy was pro-war pass unchallenged. Richard Hamilton (1972) showed that the hard hats' attacks on demonstrations were organized by management and that anti-war sentiment and civil rights support were strong among ALL groups of workers.

As for voting patterns, we find that the lower strata are no less conservative than the labor aristocrats. Szymanski (1978: ch. 3) reviews evidence about the way skill and income level affect workers' votes in Western Europe and the United States. He finds that wage level has no determinate effect on the extent to which workers vote for the left-most major political party in a country. For example, in 1967 in West Germany, high wage workers were more likely to vote Social Democrat than low wage, but in 1964 low wage workers were slightly more likely to vote Democratic than high wage workers in the (non-South) United States. Skilled workers, according to the studies, are more likely to vote "left" when the left is weak whereas unskilled workers are more likely to vote "left" when the left is strong. This implies that radicalism may be more likely to develop first among skilled workers.

Dreier and Szymanski (1980) look at a related question: Do workers in industries with heavy investments or trade with Third World countries or with heavy sales to the military express more conservative attitudes on sample surveys than workers in industries with less imperial involvement? They find that political attitudes are *not* related to these characteristics of industries. This result, of course, contradicts the expectation of labor aristocracy theory. Consider the support for McGovern in 1972. Among those who worked in industries with the least investment involvement in the Third World, 42% supported McGovern, as compared to 43% among those working in industries with the greatest involvement. If we compare industries with the least proportion of shipments to the military with those with the greatest, we likewise find no difference in the percent supporting McGovern. Similar results hold for support of the right of "Blacks to push themselves even where they are not wanted," not trusting business, supporting reductions in the military budget, and many other issues. Finally, Nackenoff (1982, 1983, and personal communication) finds that workers in "monopoly sector" industries and in aristocratic occupations have essentially the same political attitudes as other workers.

Nor can the idea that the lower strata are more radical be shown by the politics of the unions of these different groups of workers. Proponents of labor aristocracy theory can support their claims by pointing to the relatively progressive Farmworkers and to the ILGWU's opposition to immigration restrictions; and they can contrast this to the conservatism of the "aristocratic" Teamsters and construction unions and to the protectionism of the UAW and Steelworkers. But one can with equal justice point to the official protec-

tionism of the "lower stratum" Garment Workers; to the social democratic liberalism of the Machinists and the Mazocchi wing of the OCAW; and to the support the 2-million member NEA gives to many progressive movements. Furthermore, no group of lower stratum workers has staged a political strike for safety-related legislation, or struck in order to overturn anti-labor court decisions. The "aristocratic" coal miners, however, have done just that in recent years.

### C. The Black Movement

*Line of March*, as well as many others on the left, believe that the experience of black struggles in the 1960s and 1970s supports the labor aristocracy thesis. On the surface, this might seem to be true. Black workers have been the most radical section of the population, and today black reformists are to the left of white reformists. Blacks are also, on average, to be found among the worst off sections of the working class. Nevertheless, Black radicalism is not primarily the result of blacks getting a lesser share of the bribe, as the labor aristocracy thesis would imply. Blacks have been to the left of whites because the black movement has combined the struggle for equality and liberation with the fight for economic change.

The point is that Blacks do not struggle merely as an undifferentiated element within the worst off section of the working class, as the labor aristocracy thesis might have it. They organize as *Blacks* to end their *special oppression* with results from white racism. This struggle does not necessarily develop toward a class wide political perspective. The racism of white workers of all strata makes it difficult to believe that class-wide unity in practice is possible. On the other hand, Blacks who have moved toward a radical working class politics have not tended to come from the lower strata but rather from the better off sections of the working class.

Thus, during the 1960s, the most advanced section of the Black Movement was probably the Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) among Detroit autoworkers. These workers were among those *Line of March* classifies as aristocrats. They had unionized, high paying jobs (although within their industry, they were in the worst jobs and at the bottom of the seniority lists). Their struggle began as a fight opposing the systematic discrimination against Blacks within the auto industry and within the union and it progressively broadened its outlook. What undoubtedly contributed to DRUM's adoption of a class perspective on politics was the fact that they worked in an industry where the labor process is highly collective and where black and white workers are thrown together against the day-to-day oppression of the company and the collaboration of the union bureaucracy. The movement also was able to draw on the long tradition of labor struggle and working class politics in the auto industry in particular and in Detroit in general. Their having "aristocratic" jobs was pretty much beside the point.

Today, of course, Black workers are to the left (less conservative) of white workers. This is reflected in Congressional Black Caucus politics and the overwhelming anti-Reagan vote of Blacks. However, this is not because they are "lower strata" workers, but a result of national and racial oppression. Black workers with

*good jobs* are no more likely to vote for Reagan or oppose the Black Caucus from the right than are those with bad jobs or the unemployed. Nor is the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists significantly different from the left liberal section of the labor bureaucracy; and the opposition to concessions in auto and steel has been heavily white despite the fact that many of the laid-off workers are Black.

### D. Perspectives on a Divided Working Class

The labor aristocracy theory ends up as self defeating, because it directs our attention away from some of the most organized and powerful sections of the working class. Workers in basic, "aristocratic" industries such as auto, steel, freight, coal mining, machine tools, agricultural implements, aerospace, and construction, as well as many parts of the public sector, have been and continue to be at the core of large and sometimes successful struggles. This was true in the 1930s; it remained true in France and Italy in the explosions of the late 60s and early 70s; it was the case in the small but significant rank and file upsurge in the same period in the US.; it was true in Poland in 1980. In the US today, some of the foregoing industries are declining. This does raise serious problems for developing a strategy in the working class, but these are not the questions raised by the labor aristocracy theory. At the same time many other "aristocratic" sectors remain and are growing. To turn away from them means to turn away from an indispensable source of working class power.

By focusing on the lower strata, and turning away from industrial workers and many public sector workers, the labor aristocracy theory calls for orienting around the weakest and least organized workers. This is not to say that such workers cannot play a critical role. However, to talk about the need to organize the lower strata as something *opposed* to defending the pay and working conditions of the "aristocracy" is madness. It has, indeed, led LOM to the wildly self-destructive step of calling on the "aristocratic" workers of big industry to accept concessions.\*

\*Seltzer (1982) presents a long analysis of the struggle against auto concessions. He argues (pp. 11-12) that "... a forthright struggle must be waged against the idea that contract concessions must be opposed as a matter of principle. . . . Recognizing that the auto workers are objectively in a period of retreat, we must determine our tactics with that in mind. . . . For this task, the slogan of 'no concessions' is inadequate. . . . Rather, the class struggle forces must make their stand on the question of *job security* for as many auto workers as possible. . . . auto workers (especially the more protected strata) must be prepared to make some concessions in wages or benefits if they get in return contract provisions that have real teeth and provide substantial guarantees of job security for large numbers of workers. . . . The matter must be posed this forthrightly, even while knowing full well that a growth in influence for this approach might well be a catalyst that causes the present "no concessions" forces to split between those workers with relatively protected jobs and those facing real threats of layoff." This seems very reasonable until you realize that a movement like the "no concessions" movement can be won to fight against both concessions and layoffs, and that the fight against each will be strengthened by the shared interests of all auto workers in avoiding both.

## Against the Current

In a period in which the state and the corporations have unleashed an attack on the working class of proportions unseen since the 1930s, our job must be to work for the unity of currently-divided and antagonistic sectors. It is doubtful today if *any* sectors of the working class can stand up long by itself against the employers' offensive. Even the most strategically placed and best organized need to ally with the unorganized and the unemployed. Otherwise, capital will use these weaker layers to break the power of the stronger ones. At the same time, it should be obvious that a strong and militant union can provide an excellent base for organizing the unemployed and unorganized. The tasks are not counterposed; they are necessarily complementary.\*

### The Unity of Politics and Economics

The labor aristocracy theory of the union officialdom has consequences. If the officials' task is not centrally, or in large part, to control and discipline the ranks, then the door is open to a strategy, a focus on "progressive officials" (who often appear to be to the left of the ranks on "political" issues), instead of on the workers themselves. Thus, if a union leader articulates a good line on El Salvador or civil rights, that is made decisive for "supporting" him/her (which is far different from, correctly, working with them on particular issues). The task is then to win union officers to "progressive politics." The problem of politics is thus reduced to consciousness (raising), divorced from the class struggle. The historic fact that such "left" unionists, once in office, are normally quickly transformed into clones of their predecessors (especially where class struggle issues are involved) evades notice, unfortunately. Generations of socialists have supported the Reuthers, Currans, Bridges only to see their politically-defined (anti-racist, pro-socialist) allies turn into bureaucratic officials who repudiate their politics, make deals with capital which cost thousands of jobs, and become defenders of capitalism rather than its opponents.

This implicit tendency to support one section of the labor bureaucracy has its roots in and is intensified by an erroneous conception of the relation between the development of workers' *politics* and their experience in the class struggle. Politics and economics are seen as isolated, as existing independently of each other.

However, we all know that large numbers of workers only discover their own strength in the process of struggle. Only in concrete battles do they become open to the strategies needed to win—strategies which include the necessary unity and alliances with other workers and other movements without which victory will be impossible.

Thus, far from counterposing the economic to the political struggle, the rank and file strategy (labeled "economist" by LOM and many social democrats alike) takes as its point of departure that workers' self-activity against the bosses is the key to changing their *politi-*

*cal* consciousness. Naturally these struggles may sometimes start with a conscious political aspect, as for example when they are precipitated by movements outside the workplace. (As in France in 1968 and in this country when the black movement set off a workers struggle in some Detroit factories.) But that is the exception rather than the rule. More normally, it is that famous "molecular process" in which *what is first a militant minority response*, explodes into a "spontaneous" combustion, often as a result of an employer's act—a straw which breaks the camel's back. The rank and file strategy starts from the idea that these defensive struggles, whatever their origin, must be nurtured and developed, and that the way to do so is, beyond participating in the workers daily struggle, to offer policies which at a certain stage become "politics." It is in these struggles which engender the need for unity and hostility to all bureaucracies, state and union, that workers come to recognize the need for anti-racist-sexist policies, politics, and they become part of the real consciousness of the working class. (That is how the Southern racist white males who manned the Detroit auto plants in the '30s forged a multi-racial union which of necessity, by the logic of the struggle, became for a time the vanguard of the American working class on anti-racism, the need for independent political action etc.)

None of this is to say that the rank and file approach offers a magical solution to the tasks of socialists in the unions. But the road to politicizing the workers struggle is not by separating, or counterposing the political struggle to the economic struggle.

### V. THE RANK AND FILE APPROACH AND POLITICS

I have criticized *Line of March* quite severely, but I do want to applaud their forceful raising of the question of politics. Revolutionary work in the working class can easily become non-political.

Unfortunately, the low level of struggle makes it difficult to raise political points in ways that don't seem utopian and, thus, silly. Under these circumstances, ideas like *Line of March's* can seem appealing as a way out of our frustration. But they are gimmicks that lead nowhere, both because they are based on faulty analysis and, more importantly, because there is no magic solution that will cut through our difficulties. Until the workers movement can credibly be seen as a challenger for power, only a very few workers will take our ideas seriously. We have to learn to live with this. *Patience* is a revolutionary *virtue* in times like these—just as the cry for patience can be a mask for *reaction* when the movement is on the upswing.

In this context, what can be done? My insistence on patience is in no way a cry of despair. Even in times like these a *rank and file approach* can have considerable positive impact on events. I want to conclude by describing how one rank and file movement approaches politics, discussing its limits, and considering how revolutionaries can relate to this.

For a number of years, there has been a rank and file movement in the Teamsters (TDU). It has thousands of members. In some cities and local unions, TDU is a

\*Labor aristocracy theory is misleading tactically as well as strategically. For an analysis of the errors it led to in *Line of March's* activity during a long Blue Shield strike in San Francisco in 1980–1981, write to Sam Friedman in care of *Against the Current*.

power to be reckoned with, whereas in others it is quite weak. TDU has a wide experience in contract campaigns, in strikes (both wildcat and official), in union election campaigns, in publishing a national newspaper and area/Local/company papers, and in organizing unorganized workers into the Teamsters. They often help strikers in other unions. They are beginning to learn how to work with the unemployed, starting of course with unemployed Teamsters.

They also have an annual convention and frequent local and regional meetings at which a wide range of strategies and issues are discussed. This is important. Our struggles are depoliticized by our not having any way to discuss their meaning with broad audiences. A national rank and file group lets us have these discussions (within the limits of its boundaries).

Many active and leading members of TDU would like to have the organization be more political. They are restrained, however, by their context. TDU is an organization of activist Teamsters who want to win their battles with their employers and therefore want to change their union. This means that it has to mobilize and activate large numbers of Teamsters in its campaigns and struggles. Most of these Teamsters, and indeed most TDU members, think that what we call "politics" is irrelevant and divisive. Thus, for TDU to focus too much on politics at this time would isolate it and lead it to become a small sect rather than an organization that can contribute to building a serious (and political) workers movement. Indeed, there is a small and isolated group, the Fighting Teamster, that has been taking an approach to politics that is akin to that of Line of March (although I am sure there are major ideological disagreements between them)—and has been getting nowhere.

Why is this? Line of March (and perhaps Fighting Teamster) activists would argue that TDU is an organization of labor aristocrats with a vested interest in avoiding class politics. As I tried to show earlier in this paper, I think that belief is wrong. There is no such interest that makes drivers less radical than the thousands of Teamster members who work in other jurisdictions in the "lower strata." Among all these Teamsters, and among every sector of the working class that I know of, the political picture is the same: Some workers agree with our vision as being a good one, but think it is utopian and will never happen; others disagree with us altogether. A tiny, almost invisible, minority is willing to talk about it. However, all of these are agreed that at this time revolutionary politics is irrelevant to the practical solution of their daily problems and, even worse, divisive when people get together to take action. The fact that we disagree with their estimate does not get them to go along with our ideas. Indeed, it should cause us to recognize two formally contradictory facts that can only be reconciled by long and difficult practice: First, they are right when they say that many of our ideas are, presently, divisive and irrelevant, and thus will disrupt workers' attempts to fight their bosses or to solve their problems. Second, we are right when we say that their struggles cannot succeed without our ideas, *without* radically changing the society.

What is to be done? How can we overcome this impasse? As I argued earlier, it takes patience to stick out the struggle to resolve this contradiction. We need to

work to build rank and file movements and thus to get the class into motion. As we do this, we can try to convince selected people by ones and twos of our entire politics and thus recruit and organize a core of revolutionaries within the working class. Within larger groups, such as TDU or conferences such as those held by Labor Notes and the Association for Union Democracy, we should encourage the development of strategic discussion and try to use these discussions as opportunities to broaden people's perspective about what the struggle is and who the opponents are. As we develop a movement with some strength, we will be able to raise a wider set of ideas, since participants in such a movement will want to use their new power to fix up a variety of social ills. As other movements grow up alongside those we are individually working in, this will offer opportunities to broaden the sense of class and class destiny even more, and this in turn will spark additional movements (particularly among weaker sections of the working class).

In addition, we should always be alert for opportunities to make our points via practical action. Let me emphasize the term "practical action." Given the problem we face, that most workers see our ideas as irrelevant because they can't be put into practice, rhetoric or actions that attract hopelessly little support are at best useless. However, when confronted with a chance to take serious action against a Klan attack on a union member who has bought a house in a white area, or against a manager who sexually harasses workers, these same workers will respond. On a more systematic basis, working to form a committee in which employed and unemployed local members confront the problems of the unemployed can lead to joint work with other similar committees and to active support in movements dealing with evictions or welfare. Even opposition to protectionism might be approached in this way, under the appropriate circumstances, combining propaganda about how it won't work and it will get us into a war with Japan with efforts to build concrete support for the struggles of workers in other countries.

In general, we should try to *link* struggles insofar as possible. This is never easy, but is necessary to build class solidarity and political consciousness—and since we are proposing that our group join a struggle that is already mobilizing considerable effort, our proposal will not seem futile and irrelevant. (And workers will have an incentive to accept our idea since if we help others we can later on ask for their help when we need it.) Strike support is the obvious example of this. However, the steelworkers in Indiana who worked in the Bially Alliance to oppose a nuke near their plant were also linking up issues.

Finally, as the movements we are working in become important, we can expect state intervention against them. The miners faced injunctions against wildcats and Presidential intervention against their contract strike. The idea of a witchhunt against TDU has been mentioned in government circles. Such attacks can destroy a movement, but they also hold out the possibility of politicizing it particularly if there is a respected left presence in the movement. Then, the mobilization against governmental attacks can help us to raise the question of the class nature of state and society in a practical and convincing way. ■

## Against the Current

**Table 1**

USA: Average Weekly Earnings of Production or Nonsupervisory Workers on Private Nonagricultural Payrolls, and Consumer Price Index, 1947, 1964, 1971

	1947	1964	1971	Percent Change		Rate of Change	
				1947-1971	1964-1971	1947-1971	1964-1971
Total Private	\$45.58	\$ 91.33	\$126.91	178%	39%	4.35%	4.82
Mining	59.94	117.74	171.72	186	46	4.48	5.56
Contract Construction	58.87	132.06	213.36	262	62	5.51	7.13
Total Manufacturing	49.17	102.97	142.44	190	38	4.54	4.71
Durable Goods Mfg.	51.76	112.19	153.52	197	37	4.64	4.60
Nondurable Goods Mfg.	46.03	90.91	128.12	178	41	4.35	5.03
Transportation and Public Utilities	NA	118.37	169.24	NA	43	NA	5.24
Total Trade	38.07	74.28	100.74	165	36	4.14	4.49
Wholesale Trade	50.14	102.31	146.07	191	43	4.55	5.24
Retail Trade	33.77	64.75	86.61	156	34	3.99	4.27
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate Services	43.21	85.79	121.36	181	41	4.40	5.03
Consumer Price Index	66.9	92.9	121.3	81	31	2.50	3.93

NA: Not Available

Source of data for 1947, 1964, 1971: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Handbook of Labor Statistics 1972*. pp. 226, 276.

**Table 2**

Unemployment Rates by Race and Sex, USA

	Unemployment Rate			Ratio to White Male Rate		
	1948	1971	1980	1948	1971	1980
White males	3.4%	4.9%	6.1%	1.00	1.00	1.00
White females	3.8	6.3	6.5	1.12	1.29	1.07
Black and other males	5.8	9.1	13.3	1.71	1.86	2.18
Black and other females	6.1	10.8	13.1	1.79	2.20	2.15
Black and Other: Total	5.9	9.9	13.2	1.74	2.02	2.16

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Handbook of Labor Statistics 1972*. p.129.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1981*. p. 383.

**Table 3**

Median Money Income of Family by Race of Householder, USA

	Income		Ratio (Black and Other/White)	Index (1947 = 100)	
	White	Black and Other		White	Black and Other
1950	\$ 3,445	\$ 1,869	54%	109	116
1970	10,236	6,516	64	324	404
1978	18,368	11,754	64	582	728

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1981*. p. 436.

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### ERRATUM

The Editors wish to state that the article in the Spring '83 issue on Poland was erroneously attributed to Robert Brenner. It was in fact an editorial statement.

The Charles H. Kerr Company, the world's oldest non-sectarian publisher of socialist and labor literature, is putting together a compendium entitled *Who's Who in U.S. Prisons: 1984*. The book will gather short sketches of those imprisoned for labor, feminist, environmentalist, antiracist, peace, anti-imperialist and other political activities and for exercising free speech. It will also include persons whose offenses are not strictly political but who are victims of racist, sexist and anti-gay prosecutions. The Kerr Company asks defense committees and civil liberties organizations, as well as prisoners themselves, to write Charles H. Kerr Company, 1740 Greenleaf Avenue, Suite 7, Chicago, IL 60626 with information on such cases.



The meaning of socialist democracy has become very obscured in recent decades. The emergence of the concept of Poder Popular, People's Power, in Cuba is held by some as a significant theoretical and practical advance in the development of socialist democracy. Against the Current is therefore pleased to offer these diverse perceptions of Popular Power by three long-term students of Cuban affairs—James Petras, Morris M. Morley, Sam Farber and Fred Denfert. Further comments from our readers are welcome.

## “PEOPLE’S POWER” IN CUBA\*

by Fred Denfert

In a transitional society, the masses have to be involved in the exercise of power on two levels. One is direct involvement in making policy decisions on all the central options in the building of a socialist society, including the formulation of the national economic plan. The other is effective monitoring of the administration of the various institutions and the management of enterprises, as well as of the implementation of the plan.

The Soviet bureaucracy’s ideologues generally pose mass participation in the exercise of power from the standpoint of “involvement in administration.” Thus, in Victor Turovtsev’s work *People’s Monitoring in the Socialist Society*—which was distributed to the delegates to the 1975 congress of the Cuban Communist Party (CCP)—there is a long section on how to “involve the masses in the administration of the state.” Such considerations are a clear reflection of the ideological contortions demanded of a bureaucracy that has expropriated all power from the workers but continues incessantly to proclaim the “leading role of the working class.”

Turovtsev writes: “It is necessary to teach the workers the art of administration, to find the most practical ways for them to play a part in it and to exercise supervision over it. . . . The main thing is to assure that all levels of administration are open to monitoring by the people,

and that every citizen is involved in one form or another in democratic inspection. But at the same time, interference cannot be permitted in administrative processes that demand a specific mandate and individual responsibility. To fail to understand this would result in undermining leadership, and tolerating disorder, indiscipline, and anarchistic methods. It would foster an attitude of irresponsibility cloaked in empty phrases about democratic and collective decision making.”

This notion of a “specific mandate and individual responsibility” expresses concretely the bureaucracy’s monopolization of power and the exclusion of the masses from any real involvement in the exercise of power or monitoring of it. This monopoly of decision making is implemented through the single bureaucratized party, which controls all the “responsible” posts (that is, the *Nomenklatura*).

This role of the single party was codified in Article 126 of the Soviet constitution of 1936. It is defined even more clearly in the new Soviet constitution adopted in October 1977.

### The Leading Role of the Single Party

From a constitutional and institutional standpoint, the Castroist conception of the participation of the masses in the exercise of power combines traits similar to those of the system existing in the USSR, with some

\*This article is reproduced from the *European Journal*, International Viewpoint. Footnotes omitted.

other very distinctive features of its own, in a context where the great majority of the people remain attached to their revolution and to its historic leadership.

Thus, we find in the Cuban constitution of February 1976, the following affirmation of the principle of the role of the single party: "The Communist Party of Cuba, the organized vanguard of the working class, is the supreme leading force in the society and the state, whose common efforts it directs toward the achievement of the lofty aims of building socialism and advancing toward the communist society."

This concept is not a new one in Castroist thinking. In 1961, Fidel Castro said: "I sincerely believe that of all the political systems conceived of by humanity throughout its long history, the best system of government is one based on a state directed by a democratic revolutionary party with a collective leadership."

The Cuban constitution was largely modeled on the Soviet one, as Raul Castro clearly says: "We see for example in Article 126 of the 1936 constitution of the USSR that it states that the CP is the 'leading nucleus in all workers organizations, both social and governmental' . . . This is another fundamental principle for us to observe today when we want to implement and institutionalize our dictatorship of the proletariat. That is, the principle of the leading role of the party in all governmental and social activities. . . . In order to exercise its leading role throughout the society, the party bases itself on the state, the mass organizations, and—if necessary—on direct mobilization of the working masses."

The role assigned to the party therefore requires that there be only one. The possibility of having more than one party, even parties that would defend the basic economic and social gains of the revolution, is never considered. To the contrary, the official theory is that of a one-party state.

Of course, in a single-party system the problem of *internal democracy* within the single party takes on a great importance. Internal democracy would mean the possibility of expressing positions different from those of the leadership, being able to present these to the membership as a whole, to raise them in the leadership bodies if necessary, and finally being able to form groupings around a political platform in order to be able to defend such divergent positions.

To be sure, there have been discussions running through the various leadership bodies of the CCP, especially after the turns carried out on both the domestic and international fronts. To be sure, the leadership has shown itself capable of making critical balance sheets of its activities and its options, of explaining these to the masses, and of mobilizing the masses.

However, it is equally true that the whole functioning of the party rests largely on a high concentration of basic decision-making at the top level, and on a very clear opposition to any concept of democratic centralism that would involve the right to form tendencies and factions. In substance, democratic centralism is seen as the operation of criticism and self-criticism within the framework of a monolithic party.

The Cuban CP leadership has made a dogma out of the temporary ban on factions adopted by the Tenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party in March 1921. In Sta-

linist tradition, this decision became a rule of party functioning that forbids ideological tendencies as well as factions.

So, in the *Political Orientation Course* for 1973–74, subtitled *The Leninist Party*, which was supposed to be the basis for preparing the cadres to participate in the First Congress of the CCP in 1975, it says: "The Marxist-Leninist conception of party unity was most precisely formulated in the resolution adopted by the Tenth Congress of the CP (b) of Russia, which was written by Lenin in 1921. It notes that all conscious workers must understand clearly the harm done by all sorts of factional activity, which cannot be tolerated, since in practice they lead inevitably to undermining collective work."

Further on, in order to clarify this point and to characterize anyone who might oppose these conceptions it is explained: "In Russia, it was the Trotskyists, the right-wing capitulationists, and other enemies of Leninism who promoted the theory that it was possible for various currents and factions to coexist in the same party, and who tried to undermine the party in its struggle against the class enemy."

In the Castroist conception, affirming the leading role of the party in all spheres does not mean that there is no recognition of the need for a division between the party and the state. The existence of the People's Power bodies reflects, to a certain extent, a partial separation. Raul Castro explained to the party cadres: "Never forget in your activities that the party does not administer, and that it must not in any case interfere in the day-to-day work of the organs of 'People's Power' and their administrative apparatuses."

Nonetheless, this principle of separation is severely limited. Andre and Francine Demichel indicate: "If there are no party members in the trade-union leadership, the party can get itself invited to meetings of the union executive. Likewise, in administration for every institution there is a list of positions that the party must monitor. Party approval is necessary for all professors, researchers, and cadres concerned with teaching Marxism."

In this regard, it should be noted that the preamble to the constitution states that "Cuban citizens are guided by the triumphant doctrine of Marxism-Leninism."

Further on in their book, Andre and Francine Demichel write: "This relative osmosis between the party and the state is reflected also in the composition of the party. While the category 'workers carrying out tasks of administrative and political leadership' accounts for 7.7% of the employed population, it is 42.1% for the party."

## The Mass Organizations

All the mass organizations were set up during the period of large-scale mobilizations in 1959–62, which was marked by the growing over of the revolution into a socialist one and the defeat of imperialism in the attempted landing at Playa Giron (April 17, 1961).

In 1960, the Committees to Defend the Revolution (CDRs), the Cuban Federation of Women (FMC), the Association of Young Rebels (the future UJC—Young Communist League) were founded. In 1961, the Na-

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tional Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) was set up. Only the Cuban Workers Confederation (CTC), the single labor confederation, predates the revolution, having been founded in 1929. But it played a leading role in the 1958 general strike.

The history of the Cuban mass organizations is inseparable from that of the mobilization of the workers and their allies and of the advances of the revolution. In every test, they have answered specific needs of the masses, not only as organs of defense and vigilance but also as instruments for social transformation. This is what has given them their legitimacy in the eyes of the masses. This characteristic differentiates them fundamentally from the "mass organizations" in the USSR, which are designed to be instruments of control over the masses in the context of the expropriation of political power by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In Cuba, the mass organizations are frameworks for *active participation*, to varying degrees of course, in a great many areas of social life, such as vigilance, the management of social services, health and educational campaigns, and so on. Thus, by their very nature, they were acutely affected by the extreme administrative centralization of the mid-1960s. Most of them came out of this period in a weaker condition. One of the objectives set by Fidel in the aftermath of the ten-million-ton *zafra* (1970)—this went hand in hand with denouncing the bureaucratic excesses—was to try to revitalize these organizations within the framework of "People's Power." But their functions were never extended to the point of making them into real organs of workers self-management.

Andre and Francine Demichel point out: "It is true that at the start, when neither the party nor the state were fully constituted, the mass organizations—especially the CDRs—played a particularly important role. But they never held 'People's Power.' It is also true that the consolidation of the party and then of the state have reduced the role of the mass organizations. In a nutshell, the mass organizations are not and have never been organs of self-managing democracy."

In the Castroist conception, the mass organizations are intended to be transmission belts transmitting the authority of the party into the masses. They serve as a liaison between the party and the masses, and are subordinated to the party and to the state:

"The mass organizations are considered in a practice as 'transmission belts' for the party. This transmission is supposed to go in both directions. It is important to make the party aware of the needs and demands of the masses. Conversely, it is necessary to disseminate the party's slogans and orientations among the masses, to assure that the revolutionary ideology generated by the party is assimilated. The mass organizations cannot have a political line of their own that might differ from that of the party." For this reason, one of the criteria that the mass organizations have to meet is to be sociologically as representative of the entire population as possible.

In 1975, the CDRs included 80% of the population over the age of fourteen (4,800,000 persons) and the FMC 80% of the women (2,127,800 persons). The CTC, ANAP, the University Students Association (FEU), and the High School Students Association (FEEM) included almost everyone in their respective categories.

Since these mass organizations do not have an orientation of their own, the selection of their cadres is under the control of the CCP: "There is an appointments list of cadres chosen by the party."

The theses of the First Congress of the CCP specify that the leading positions in the mass organizations are to be taken by party members at the various levels:

"It is necessary to establish a register of posts in every body and institution defining what basic positions must be filled by the party, both in the party bodies and in the UJC, the state and the mass organizations. . . . It must be determined what posts have to be included on the Central Committee's *nomenklatura*, as well as those of the party's provincial and municipal committees. It is necessary to assure that the key posts in every body are filled from the party register at each corresponding level."

Finally, it is important to note that the CTC shares the same characteristics as the other mass organizations. The workers do use it as an instrument for collective defense against the administration. The local delegates are, for the most part, elected by the ranks. The CTC also have a certain monitoring role with respect to the management of the enterprises. But the union federation is constrained in its activity by the fact that it is closely associated with the overall management of the economy. It has to push the implementation of the plan, it has to strive to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity. In practice, this means that the union leaders and the plant managers work closely together constantly. On the ideological level, this is codified by the formulation that "the CTC and the unions have the task of teaching the workers the communist attitude to work and social property."

The unions, thus, are not "self-managed" and independent of the state and the party. They serve to a certain extent as transmission belts between the party, the state, and the masses. Nonetheless, they capture the real activity of the masses, the demands that the workers raise. And the union leaders in the party bodies further transmit these demands and concerns. There is not the division between the union organization and the masses that exists in the "People's Democracies."

At the beginning of the revolution, the mass organizations played a larger role than today. To a certain extent, "People's Power" has taken over their former functions.

## PEOPLE'S POWER

The failure of the campaign for the ten-million-ton *zafra* in 1970 revealed the explosive contradictions that had been built up by the hypercentralization of the economy in the 1960s, the lack of central planning and the lack of organs of power enabling the masses to play a part in a series of important decisions. A grave economic crisis went hand in hand with rising mass discontent in the face of the emergence of a stratum of negligent functionaries and intermediary cadres, who abused their powers and enjoyed privileges.

The strength of the Castroist leadership was its ability to recognize the alarm signal given by the masses. It responded to this questioning of economic disorganization and of bureaucratic management by proposing

a profound reshaping of the institutions of the workers state. The plan for this was worked out from 1970 to 1975, and tried out in Matanzas province. It was later extended to the rest of the country. The reform was called *poder popular*.

In 1976, a new constitution was adopted, replacing the Fundamental Law adopted in February 1959. It is worth taking some time to see how it was drawn up, and then ratified by the masses, as well as to point up the changes that it introduced with respect to the Fundamental Law.

The main lines of the constitution were laid down in 1974 by the Political Bureau of the CCP and the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers (CECM). On the basis of these, a first draft was prepared by a commission composed of members of the Central Committee and the government, presided over by Blas Roca. The first draft was rediscussed by the Political Bureau and the CECM before being published and discussed by the party, the UJC, and the mass organizations.

"Then in the party the amendments coming from the ranks were discussed and sifted. During the summer of 1975, the CCP's commission on consolidation and organization studied the amendments, and retained a certain number. After that, the final draft of the constitution was drawn up at the First Congress of the CCP (December 17-22, 1975). It was published on December 27.

"The draft was finally sent to the people for adoption. The referendum was held on February 15, 1976. All citizens above the age of sixteen voted. There were 5,602,973 ballots cast, 98% of the number registered to vote. The constitution was approved by 5,473,534 votes (97.7%) against 54,070 (1%). It was adopted on February 24, 1971."

In the absence of any extensive opportunity for public debate on the national level, this kind of democracy is quite formal. It is a good reflection of the paternalistic and didactic nature of the Castro leadership's relations with the masses. The balance sheet of the two-year long process by which the constitution was drawn up and adopted is in fact eloquent.

a) "By comparison with the first draft, the final one had relatively few changes, and those were essentially technical."

b) "In a meeting of the twenty members of the editing committee, it was said that the hand and thinking of Fidel could be seen in almost all the articles of the first draft. . . . It was he who introduced the largest number of adjustments and modifications. . . . In fact, a third of the changes were results of proposals made by Comrade Fidel."

The new constitution, however, contains a number of new elements that could have been the subject of a major national debate.

The Fundamental Law, adopted in the aftermath of the seizure of power, was a bourgeois democratic constitution. It proclaimed respect for private property (Article 24), and for freedom of the press, assembly and association (Article 33). In particular, it recognized both the right to strike and the right to lockout (Article 71). It provided for elections and a multi-party system.

Leaving aside the points already highlighted regarding the role of the party and the mass organizations, it

must be noted that in the new constitution all democratic rights are made conditional on conformity to the objectives of the socialist revolution. There is no mention of the right to strike. In view of the role that is accorded to the single party, this constitution could only lead to a limited conception of "People's Power."

In his speech of September 28, 1971, Fidel Castro left no ambiguity about the nature of "People's Power," explaining that it was intended to "carry through a deep-going administrative decentralization, to put under the control of the communities, all those activities that, because of their regional nature, they can monitor, direct, and administer." Article 102 of the constitution adopted four years later contains almost the same formulation.

However, it is probably in Fidel Castro's July 26, 1977, speech on "People's Power" that the definition is clearest, and it is worth quoting it at length:

"The key principle (of 'People's Power') is that every productive unit or service facility that provides goods or services to the community must be managed and monitored by the community." This was to apply to the municipal, provincial, and national levels. "This means that the schools, treatment centers, stores, bars, factories, movie houses, leisure centers, and all other centers are and will continue to be managed and administered by the 'People's Power' body in every locality. There will no longer be in Cuba a single movie house, store, or school managed centrally from Havana. . . . They will be monitored and managed by their own community. . . . There will be certain activities and units which because they work for the entire country will be monitored centrally by the national 'People's Power'—the merchant marine, heavy industry, the banks, the fishing fleet, the railroads. . . . But all other activities will be run by the municipalities and the provinces.

"This decentralization does not mean, however, that every community or province is going to be on its own. . . . They will have to follow certain norms in order to avoid inequalities and disparities from developing around the country. The services offered have to be similar. A municipal hospital, for example, cannot do what it pleases; it will have to maintain standards similar to those in the rest of the country. . . . But aside from this, the local 'People's Power' will be the unit of government responsible for what goes on in this hospital, for the way in which it is run and the way its personnel responds to the needs expressed by the population. . . . The members of the community will be responsible for everything that happens in this hospital. In the previous period of the revolution, the community was served by the hospital or the polyclinic. But these facilities were administered by the Ministry of Health. Henceforth, they will be administered by the community."

The "People's Power" thus represents administrative decentralization, putting activities of a regional character under the control of the communities. Up to the municipal level, the delegates are chosen and elected by the local population. They are subject to recall at all these levels.

But the decision-making process remains highly centralized and not subject to direct control by the

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masses, and the same goes for the management of enterprises of national importance, banks, and so forth.

The Theses of the First Congress of the CCP, clarify this latter aspect further: "The decentralization process involves transferring to the local organs of 'People's Power' activities, productive units and service facilities, as well as the creation of enterprises subject to local control. It must be accompanied by a reinforcement of the planning and systematic inspection functions that belong to the central organs of the state."

Centralization is assured by the structure of "People's Power." It consists of a series of municipal and provincial assemblies rising in a pyramid towards a National Assembly, the "highest legislative body." This assembly names the Council of State, which has a chairman, Fidel Castro. He is also chairman of the supreme executive and administrative body, the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, whose members he nominates for ratification by the National Assembly.

"The successive delegations of authority from the National Assembly to the Council of State and from the Council of State to the chairman can lead to a concentration of powers, as is now the case, in the hands of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers. The latter body will probably be, as it is now, composed essentially of members of the Political Bureau of the Party."

What is more: "All the members of the Council of Ministers, except the chairman, are named by the National Assembly of 'People's Power' on the recommendation of the chairman of the Council of Ministers elected by the Assembly. He accepts the resignation of members of the Council of Ministers and nominates their replacements for ratification by the Assembly or the Council of State (Articles 7 and 9)."

Andre and Francine Demichel draw the conclusion: "In Cuba, there is a certain one-man rule—which might be considered a step backward—in the executive organs, since the chairman of the Council of State, who is also the chairman of the Council of Ministers, has powers detachable from the bodies over which he presides. From the standpoint of theory, such a situation cannot be justified, not even by the need to tailor the constitution to fit the special role played by Fidel Castro."

The process of drawing up the plan illustrates this extreme concentration of decision-making power over which the masses have no control, but which is accompanied by an administrative decentralization that provides some room for real mass activity.

All the basic decisions are made in the Political Bureau and Secretariat of the CCP, and then *ratified* by the congress of the CCP, following the same stages that preceded the submission of the draft constitution to a national referendum.

On the basis of the general outline drawn up by the Political Bureau and Secretariat of the CCP, JUCEPLAN (the Central Planning Board), whose chairman is a member of the Council of Ministers, works out the first draft of the national development plan, after consulting with the plant managers, the mass organizations, groups of specialists, and so forth. This plan is then submitted to the National Assembly, which can amend it and, theoretically, either accept or reject it. Up until now, it has never rejected it, and it is hard to see how such a thing could happen since CP and UJC

activists strongly predominate at all levels in the structure of "People's Power."

The delegates to "People's Power" bodies are only nominated and elected directly up to the level of the municipal assemblies. Moreover, it is not the members of the municipal assemblies who choose the candidates for the provincial assemblies or for the National Assembly but a nominating commission presided over by a representative of the party.

The nominating commission can propose persons who have not been elected by popular vote for municipal assemblies. It is by this mechanism that representatives of the activists in trade unions and enterprises vital to the national interest that remain outside the sphere of the local "People's Power" bodies are included in the structure of "People's Power," since the electoral unit is not the workplace or school but the neighborhood.

The filtering-out mechanism is thus extremely effective. It is so much so that in 1976, 72.2% of the locally elected delegates were members of the CP or the UJC, and this percentage went up to 96.7% of the delegates to the National Assembly (91.7% were members of the CP and 5% of the UJC).

Since the party members have already approved the orientations in the CCP congress, their contributions are *always* limited to amendments of a technical order. This in fact is the reason why they are chosen. Because of the existence of a single party that does not recognize the right of factions and tendencies, there is no possibility of an alternative at the national level.

Nor does the control of the press by the party and the mass organizations linked to it leave any room for debating orientations and ideas. This deprives the masses of a fundamental tool of workers democracy. In fact, the delegates are not elected on the basis of their political positions but of their personal abilities to defend the key decisions and carry them out in practice. The National Assembly cannot therefore in reality play the role of the supreme body of "People's Power." Indeed, the network of "People's Power" organs has a dual function:

—Firstly, to better adjust the central choices to possibilities and needs, because the delegates transmit innumerable and incessant complaints from the workers.

—Secondly, to curb bureaucratic tendencies and administrative red tape on the local level, that is, in the area that touches the masses directly and where they are rightly very sensitive.

The way in which the masses have taken on the task of solving the immediate local problems posed for them through the organs of "People's Power," and the struggle they are waging in the neighborhoods and municipalities against bureaucratic snarls are the best demonstration of their capacity for action and their devotion to the revolution. At the same time, this gives an indication of greater possibilities, if the masses had real organs of socialist democracy at the regional and national levels instead of the present bodies which serve only as a means for applying pressure and for expressing their feelings. The experience accumulated by the Cuban workers over these last twenty years of the revolution provides an important springboard for such a transformation ■



# POPULAR POWER IN CUBA: A COMMENTARY

by James F. Petras and Morris H. Morley

**T**he major contradiction in revolutionary Cuba is between collective forms of ownership of the means of production and the bureaucratic control still exercised over decision making. The origins of this contradiction are embedded in the history of Cuban labor organization and struggle, the nature of the national liberation movement of the 1950s that overthrew the Batista dictatorship, and the type of post-insurrectionary confrontations with the U.S. imperial state. These historical experiences led to the evolution of bureaucratic centralist structures during the 1960s which, in turn, developed policies (ideology and practices) further strengthening these immanent tendencies.

The Cuban revolutionary process has always been riven by an acute tension between class struggle (proto-revolutionary) and bureaucratic (conservative) tendencies. This tension manifests itself from the 1933 revolution to the present day, finding expression through a variety of contradictory forms. Neither the first Batista regime (1940-44), nor the liberal regimes of Ramon Grau San Martin (1944-48) and Carlos Prío Socarras (1948-52) could completely suppress or coopt the underlying tensions. The effort by Batista to confront and destroy the pressures from below after 1952 was no more successful than his predecessors and contributed to his downfall. The subsequent attempts by the Castro leadership to completely subsume the struggle in bureaucratic centralist and productionist organizations in the latter half of the 1960s were also counter-productive.

The starting point for any discussion of "Popular Power" in Cuba is the 1933 revolution. During this massive national uprising, rural workers established "soviets" at a number of sugar complexes, municipal governments came under the control of the organized working class, and a situation of dual power began to emerge. At the same time that Cuban workers exhibited the political and organizational capacity to create "popular power" however, they lacked the military power to sustain it. The U.S.-backed Batista military coup of January 1934, and the massacres that

accompanied the bloody repression of political strikes involving hundreds of thousands of workers in February-March 1934 and March 1935 destroyed the organs of mass democratic control, devastated the workers movement and consolidated military rule in Cuba. Nonetheless, the revolutionary insurrection of 1933 remained imbedded in the consciousness of the working class as well as in the minds of the petty bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie, and U.S. corporate executives. Prior to the 1950s, it was *the* pivotal event in twentieth century Cuban history.

The foundations of the proletarian defeat dictated a difficult and slow process of renewal of the workers movement at the same time as it remained the only national alternative to the military-controlled civilian regimes that governed Cuba between 1934 and 1940—regimes which lacked any semblance of large-scale popular support or national legitimacy. To overcome this problem of regime isolation and legitimacy, the military "strongman" Batista decided to strike an historical compromise with the major political organization of the working class—the Communist Party.

With the defeat of the revolutionary upsurge and the demise of revolutionary democratic institutions, the Communist Party had begun to shift its political orientation during the latter half of the 1930s. It

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sought to ally itself with the capitalist political forces in Cuban society on the basis of "popular frontism," subordinating the struggle for state power and socialism to reformist political and economic goals, and support for the antifascist wartime political alliance between socialist and capitalist bloc countries. This shift and the emerging political crisis facing the governing regime converged and allowed Batista to forge a new political orientation. Within the boundaries defined by the maintenance of capitalist property relations and the continuation of his hold over government power to facilitate the private accumulation activities of his political clique, Batista was willing to pursue a very flexible program of reforms and concessions to a variety of groups and classes, including the working class. The Communist Party accepted those boundaries and fashioned its party and trade union activities between 1937 and 1944 to maximize its gains and those of its followers within that framework. The relationship was, however, reciprocal: in return for receiving mass support mobilized by the now legalized Communist Party, the newly elected Batista government granted a number of concrete social and economic benefits to the working class: wage increases to sugar workers; laws dealing with minimum wages, maternity insurance, job security, the eight hour day, etc. Trade unions were recognized and union organizing drives, collective bargaining, and strikes were legalized. Moreover, the regime frequently intervened to support the economic demands of labor or, more likely, refrained from the use of force.

The combined impact of organizational legality, political access, limited class struggle (strikes at the industrial level on the basis of social and economic issues) and pro-labor state intervention in wage disputes contributed to incremental gains in income for the working class and a substantial expansion in labor organization. By 1945, approximately one-third of the work force was organized. The spread of reforms and the resurgence of Communist influence in the labor movement were, however, premised on the institutionalization of that power: It was confined and defined by its class collaboration at the political level. While the class struggle at the point of production reemerged, it was dissociated from political radicalism. Yet, an unforeseen consequence that resulted from the institutionalization of the labor movement was that its increasing capacity to impose wage solutions, and its ability to curtail some of the prerogatives of capital regarding control over labor in production, limiting the process of capital accumulation. The continual needs of capital to modernize and rationalize production, to hire and fire labor, were in constant conflict with the institutional power of labor.

In sum, the class struggle tendencies within the popular movement between the late 1930s and mid-1940s were now doubly refracted: through a reformist Communist Party and an opportunist "populist" Batista. "Popular Power" shifted from the struggle for democratic forms of direct popular representation to the struggle for welfareism through "non-democratic forms of representation." The scale and scope of popular pressure, channeled into Cuban institutional structures, led to the systematic withdrawal of U.S. capital

from its traditional major investment area (sugar) throughout the period, and contributed to the stagnation of Cuban investment and economic growth.

The election of the Autentico Party candidate, Ramon Grau San Martin, in the 1944 presidential contest did not lead to any qualitative changes in working class politics. Grau was amenable to the same relationship with the Communist Party that Batista cultivated: exchange of incremental reforms and salary increases for political support of his essentially capitalist regime. But the years of practice involving the extension and enforcement of legislation, the limited struggles for economic demands, and the bureaucratic nature of the organization vitiated the Communist Party's capacity for political warfare when the Autentico trade union groupings, with government support, mounted a successful challenge to Communist Party leadership of the Confederation of Cuban Labor (CTC) in 1947-48. The labor movement and its organization and demands were so institutionalized, however, that it easily withstood the shift in leadership and continued on its bureaucratic way. The purge of the Communist Party did not have any noticeable effects at the level of labor-state relations under the Autentico government of Carlos Prío. Wages and salaries increased, protective legislation was pursued and so on. More importantly, the labor movement, with or without Communist leadership, was a major force in capitalist society at the same time as it was impotent to change it. Likewise, capitalists controlled the means of production but were unable to develop them.

Faced with the limitations imposed by the militancy of the labor movement, Batista returned to political power in 1952 via a military coup with the primary goal of "modernizing" the economy through the "rationalization" of the labor process. Essentially, he challenged the historical compromise in place since the late 1930s: the prerogatives, welfare and protection of labor were put in question.

In 1950, the World Bank prepared a report on the Cuban economy which recommended a series of measures to "discipline" labor if the conditions for large-scale and rapid capital accumulation were to be restored: greater flexibility in the job tenure system; the introduction of a merit system in the bureaucracy; the termination of government participation in wage determinations and other aspects of the labor contract (hours, tenure, vacations), etc. In the place of a dominant state role in the setting of wage levels in almost every branch of industry and agriculture, the Report advocated the substitution of effective collective bargaining procedures between labor and capital.

Although Batista agreed with the thrust of the World Bank recommendations that the needs of capital dictated a break with the constraints that labor represented, he also recognized the need for eliciting some form of labor cooperation in order to pursue this goal. He resolved this apparent dilemma by relying on the labor bureaucracy, signing pacts with its leaders and attacking regional, sectional, and rank-and-file members who created obstacles to the expansion of capital. He allowed CTC bureaucrats to draw their salaries, secure favors, and even make selective economic gains, while the bureaucracy attempted to block each and every effort by rank-and-file groups to oppose the dicta-



torial regime and its economic policies (e.g., opposition to the 1958 general strike). Instead of attacking the CTC bureaucracy *per se*, Batista sought to weaken labor's position in the factories and at the point of production. His forceful intervention against "unauthorized" strikes, independent union leadership, and the steady increase in pressures on behalf of employers (e.g., ending state intervention in labor-capital wage disputes) began to erode the cumulative social, economic, and political gains achieved by the working class over the previous twenty years. As these regime policies began to affect the labor movement adversely, and as the entrenched trade union bureaucracy continued to support Batista against the rank-and-file, a crisis within the labor movement and outside among nonaffiliated wage workers began to develop: Divisions reflecting class, regional, and generational differences began to appear. In the provincial capital of Santiago de Cuba in Oriente province, the largest urban center outside of Havana, and an historic center of independent working class organization and combativeness, *The New York Times* correspondent described its working class as being in "open revolt" against the central government as early as mid-1957. To the degree that Batista challenged the historic position of labor, he encountered mass opposition in the form of not only a popular movement in the cities but also a guerrilla vanguard in the mountains.

The unwillingness of the bureaucrats to channel this working class discontent or provide any leadership opened the field to the direct-action groups organized against Batista. The principal conflict within Cuban society, especially after 1956, was between the capitalist state embodied in the Batista dictatorship which sought to restructure Cuban society for the capitalist class as a whole, and the Cuban working class increasingly disposed to act outside the official party and trade union organizations. Thus, because the capital-labor struggle did not take place primarily between private owners and labor unions, it should not obscure the fact that a highly politicized class struggle was taking place—and not merely an amorphous political struggle with multiple class participants against a dictatorial regime.

"Popular power" shifted in the course of the struggle from a defensive struggle for trade union "corporate" issues to the revolutionary, democratic-political demands embodied in the general strike of December 1958 that culminated in Batista's overthrow.

The resurgence of revolutionary class struggle began in the mid-1950s with strikes and demonstrations by employees in diverse industries, including the sugar industry, largely over economic issues (wages, bonus payments, job security). The expression of labor discontent outside of official channels was repressed by the regime, transforming the economic conflicts into political opposition to the regime. The first major indication of mass working class opposition was the successful general strike organized by the urban resistance in Santiago in 1956. This mass working class action was not an isolated event but reflected the constant tension and hostility that existed there between the regime and the laboring masses and included a substantial number of local and provincial working class leaders. The revolutionary mobilization reflected

the dialectical interplay between the mass struggle of the cities and the armed guerrilla movement in the countryside. Beyond the tactical differences, the success of the struggle depended upon the interdependence and articulation of both sectors. The July 26 Movement was a national political formation, anchored in the mass struggle of provincial towns and the rural insurrectionaries, drawing support from wage and salaried workers of the cities and peasants in the countryside, and finding active collaboration among the younger generation of local trade union leaders. It was only with the failure of the April 1958 general strike, organized and called for by the urban resistance leadership centered in Santiago, to dislodge Batista from political power that political and military control of the Movement decisively shifted to the guerrilla forces. But the critical fact to be noted here is that the organization of the mass struggle was at all times subordinated to, and directed by, the political-military leadership whether in the mountains or the towns. The cooperation and the tension between the two approaches reflected the two strands in Cuban political history stretching back to 1933: the top down leadership responding to but ultimately controlling the mass movement: accommodating its immediate basic needs and maintaining control over the making and direction of policy.

The subsequent "socializing" phase of the revolution (1959–63) differed from the early 1933 revolution in the absence of workers' councils on the one hand and in the presence of workers' militias on the other. The post-1959 revolution was fought and consummated through defensive military organizations; "indirect representation" through the varied forms of defense organizations predominated over and against political forms of direct representation. This military definition of reality, in part, reflected the immediate task of the revolution—its defense and survival against the sustained hostility of the U.S. imperial state (political opposition, economic sanctions, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the 1962 missile crisis and blockade). It, in turn, reinforced the historic tendency toward a division between rank-and-file militance and top down leadership. The emergence of a central leadership responsive to, but independent of, democratic control from below can be characterized as a form of non-democratic representation. The revolutionary struggle, the historic mass demands for full employment, anti-imperialism, increasing egalitarianism and social welfare established the parameters within which the new revolutionary centralist regime would rule. The subsequent formulation of "Marxist" rationalizations of this particular power configuration, the borrowing from Soviet writings, were mostly post-hoc efforts to codify what was already in place.

The historic tension between the popular power from below and centralist governance from above has manifested itself throughout post-revolutionary Cuban history: the ultra-voluntarism of the regime during the 1960s, the efforts at mass mobilization, the revolutionary offensive of 1968, and the 1969–70 Gran Zafra were all efforts by the leadership to substitute centralized voluntarism for structured democratic participation from below. Voluntarism reached its zenith between 1968 and 1970, beginning with the revolu-

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tionary offensive (expropriation of all private retailers, artisans, petty commodity producers and manufacturers) and culminating in the ten million ton sugar harvest effort. Both were a function of a renewed emphasis on consciousness (moral over material incentives, etc.) and the notion that "human will" could transcend the constraints imposed by underdeveloped capitalism or underdeveloped state socialism—and thereby accelerate the development of productive forces. The 1968 offensive and the *zafra* did curb one form of incipient bureaucratism and parasitic economic activity, but the state proved incapable of creating alternative forms of rulership or of managing many of the services that were replaced. The results included not only economic dislocations and the decline of certain basic services and consumer items, but a thriving black market and renewed tendencies toward bureaucratic rigidity. The failure of the ultra-voluntarist political framework to sustain basic social needs during the 1960s threatened the historic compromise between the masses and the leadership. Above all, it reflected the existence of a revolution that had never institutionalized any form of democratic consent and a leadership that alone interpreted the "revolutionary will" without being constrained by, or accountable to, popular opinion.

The leadership effort to rectify this emerging rupture between it and the rank-and-file during the early 1970s was an implicit recognition of the underlying potentialities for mass discontent and independent political power. What occurred was a shift in emphasis from mass mobilization to economic planning and programming, from a stress on moral exhortation to a greater concern with material incentives, from a focus on revolutionary asceticism to expanded consumer rewards. Further, under the prodding from sectors of the older Communist leadership, efforts were made to revitalize the moribund trade unions by allowing them a limited role in representing labor interests at the factory level. "Popular power" also reemerged in the form of local assemblies elected by popular vote who were delegated decision making powers over issues affecting education and administration. At the same time, while decentralization and self-financing strengthened enterprise managers at the expense of central political authorities, they did not greatly increase workers control over basic planning. That is, the shift from mass mobilization to "party building" may have facilitated more efficient planning, but not necessarily greater political accessibility for the majority of the working population. Still, the delegation of administration of local services to municipalities and the relatively free elections of local officials were tacit recognition of the re-emergence of the tradition of the 1930s: the struggle from below for direct representation. The economic and social progress—a substantial growth of consumer goods and living standards—that accompanied decentralized democratic control was a powerful argument for deepening and extending the system to the national level.

The nationwide experiment with "People's Power" in 1976—the popular election of legislative assemblies at the municipal, provincial and (indirectly) national levels—represented an effort to sustain the momentum of decentralization. However, the jurisdictional authority of these newly established bodies was quite limited to

the degree that the centralized party leadership viewed them as essentially complementing, but not undermining, the existing national political structure. Put another way, they were a concession from the top to make the overall system work, not a first step toward the transformation of that system.

The slowdown of growth in the period from 1976 to the present coincides with the freezing of political change: further socioeconomic growth is, to a significant degree, hindered by the continued centralized political structure. The political centralism that served to defend the revolution against imperialist aggression in the early and mid-1960s has become a major obstacle to the further development of production forces. The historical legacy embodying the contradictions between bureaucratic centralism and democratic popular power from below remains: non-democratic representation rooted in the history of the Cuban class struggle, reflected in the revolution and its defense, has lost its historical reason for being.

The most striking development of national liberation and revolutionary socialist politics is the capacity of workers and peasants to initiate and particularly participate in shaping revolutionary processes—notably the overthrow of the old regime and the transformation of ownership and political institutions—but their incapacity to gain and retain control over the emerging post-revolutionary state. Even where the commitment to popular welfare is genuine as it clearly is in Cuba, the growth of the part-state emerges as the distinct social solution which intellectual-functionaries impose to mobilize and discipline the producers while maximizing their control over the disposal of the economic surplus. It is an irony that the party whose leadership is so vital to helping to eliminate old modes of exploitation and bringing working people to the center of the historical stage in the national liberation and early phases of socialist transition tends to become the principal obstacle to the full realization of a democratic socialism attentive to the goals of progressive workers' mastery over society.

The interface of the two processes of market integration and bureaucratism defines the essential political problem confronting working classes in the transition to democratic socialism. While centralism becomes necessary for mobilizing resources to defend the revolution and guarantee its survival, and even to deal with the substantial problems that loom in the initial stages of the development process, as the forces of production become more developed, the increasing social differentiation and collective nature of this bureaucratic organization and control more and more comes into conflict with the social nature of ownership. The subsequent alienation of producers from the planning process and decision making confronts the regime with two alternatives: either maintain the centralized political structure and provide increased material benefits combined with a degree of coercion, or decentralize and democratize, creating alternative institutions to top down management—an institutional order which makes the regime fully responsible to, and subject to, control by the direct producers. No genuine effort in this latter direction—the move toward authentic "Popular Power"—has yet taken place in revolutionary Cuba ■



"TO HAVE FREEDOM OF SPEECH IS NOT TO HAVE EVERYTHING,  
BUT TO LOSE FREEDOM OF SPEECH IS TO LOSE EVERYTHING."

# CUBA: STILL STUCK IN THE ABC'S...

by Samuel Farber\*

**F**red Denfert makes many good factual points, although there are still very important and glaring omissions. These omissions are mostly in the areas most central to Denfert's assumption that Cuba has a substantially different type of social organization from the USSR. According to Denfert, in the USSR, but not in Cuba, the "mass organizations" are "designed to be instruments of control over the masses in the context of the expropriation of political power by the Stalinist bureaucracy." I submit Denfert is mistaken in excepting Cuba's Popular Power from this role.

*Popular Power.*—This is a mock parliamentary system that has nothing to do with democracy. It is only at the lowest local level that the "voters" have some say. This, however, consists of selecting one representative out of two or more party-approved candidates, who are not allowed to campaign even on the limited issue of who would be the better implementor of party policy. All the "voter" gets are the pictures of the candidates accompanied by their respective social and political biographies. At most, this is a popularity contest where substantive issues are not allowed to intrude. At all levels of the structures of "Popular Power" the so-called debates never deal with substantive controversies and conflicting priorities, but rather with matters of implementation and detail. Let us look, for example, at the National Assembly of People's Power when they approved such momentous and critical legislation as the State Budget for 1983 and the Integral Plan for Economic and Social Development of the State for 1983. As reported by *Granma*,<sup>1</sup> after the head of the Central Planning Board presented his report, the substantive debate was limited to the following:

"Arnaldo Tamayo took the floor, not to propose changes in the text but to recommend that state agencies and institutions undertake a study on economizing electric power. He stated that there are cases of street lights, lights in offices and elsewhere that remain on unnecessarily for hours. After several other deputies spoke on the subject of economizing, the motion was carried."

"Popular Power" does have a lot to do with an attempt to *partially* decentralize decision-making, especially in those areas of the economy such as light industry and the distribution of consumer goods which are administered by the Popular Power authorities. Distribution, in particular, is a very serious bureaucratic problem in light of the fact that even the tiniest shopkeepers—e.g. corner coffee kiosks—were nationalized during the "revolutionary offensive" of 1968. There is no necessary relation, however, between decentralization and democracy. As Hal Draper<sup>2</sup> has pointed out:

"Decentralization is also not to be confused with

democratization, even when it is real rather than demagogic. In this system [bureaucratic collectivism], as in any authoritarian system, there is a decentralization which is purely administrative (an administrative device) unrelated to democratic rights or the greater diffusion of political power. In the U.S., the shining example of administrative decentralization (celebrated by Peter Drucker) is the authoritarian empire known as General Motors; this has nothing to do with democratic control of General Motors, although the decentralization is a real thing."

"Popular Power" and the "mass organizations" also have a lot to do with an attempt by the Party to obtain feedback and information about what is happening at the bottom of society. The absence of a free political life makes this the basis for a serious contradiction in this type of social system. The regime uses the "mass organizations" to transmit orders from the top down (or "orientations" as it is called in Cuba). In turn, the Party expects to find out about dissatisfactions and problems at the bottom, in order to deal with them before they may erupt into crises or possibly take dangerous political forms. But this is a very difficult goal to attain since criticism is always limited to surface matters, and can rarely go to the root of things.

Moreover, if employee dissimulation is a standard feature of the capitalist enterprise, it is a much greater problem when there is a single universal employer and a one-party political monopoly. If you are an oppositionist, you fake loyalty. If you are discontented, you fake contentment. If you support the regime and have substantive, as distinct from merely detail objections, you suppress your doubts, at least in public. This produces an institutionalized tendency for any discussion to be dominated by the bullies and by the most vociferous, uncritical, gossipy and least intelligent hacks. Thus, the regime is structurally unable to obtain the most creative and intelligent initiatives in implementing national decisions at the local level. This is also why the best intentioned campaigns against bureaucracy must be bureaucratically conducted, and are therefore useless. Furthermore, the resulting bureaucratic paralysis also helps to explain one of Fidel Castro's favorite functions: that of the revolutionary Santa Claus whom people hope to address directly, and without intermediaries, in the hope that their grievances will be really attended to. Indeed, this is an ancient political institution reminiscent of the old Russian complaint: "if the Czar only knew."

"Mass organizations" and compulsory participa-

\*Samuel Farber is a long-time socialist activist. Most recently, he has been a member of the New York-based Solidarity Committee, an anti-repression organization which has done work in support of liberation movements in Poland, South Africa, Ireland and Central America. He is also the author of *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Cuba, 1933-60* published by Wesleyan University Press in 1976.

tion.—The CDRs (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution) and other “mass organizations” (trade unions, Cuban Federation of Women, etc.) extract a great deal of unpaid “voluntary labor” in production and in other activities from the Cuban people. While nobody is *legally* compelled to join any of the mass organizations, not to do so is tantamount to committing social, political, and economic suicide. The following remark by Field Castro, in a speech to the Second Congress of the Federation of University Students, typifies the prevailing situation in Cuba:<sup>3</sup>

“You also expressed your concern over the problem of the job placement of university students . . . We’ll have to study the way to improve the placement method, taking into account academic merit, the student’s integrity, political and moral evaluation, and so forth.”

Thus, this political, social and religious<sup>4</sup> discrimination not only applies to entering higher or specialized technical education, but also to obtain, or being promoted to, any but the most menial, unskilled, and worst paid jobs in any field of endeavor. Furthermore, electrical appliances (e.g., television sets, refrigerators) and other durables are often distributed through the unions and other “mass organizations” according to work and political merits. The use of political tests to distribute relatively scarce goods, access to higher education and better employment opportunities would be very dangerous even in the most democratic of societies. In a one-employer, one-party, undemocratic state, it is nothing less than a vicious mechanism for social control. Furthermore, the mechanisms to enforce these kinds of compulsory participation have been developed with a considerable degree of bureaucratic elaboration. A vast system of personal background information, popularly referred to as “cuentame tu vida” or “tell me your life story,” concerning political attitudes, “voluntary” labor, and membership and activities in “mass organizations” is an open and taken-for-granted reality in Cuba (see enclosed box for sample form). This is most notable in all places of employment and schools where a file (“expediente”) is kept on each worker and student, listing the above information as well as routine data.

Therefore, the overwhelming majority of Cubans, regardless of their private views, belong to some kind of “mass organization,” the most frequent being the block CDR. It is hardly surprising, however, that active membership in the “mass organizations” is becoming devalued. A good record in a “mass organization” will probably help save a Cuban man or woman from getting the very worst in jobs and consumer opportunities, but it will not help him or her very much in getting the best things available in the island. In order to get these, it is becoming increasingly necessary to be a member of the Cuban Communist Party or of the Communist Youth Union (UJC), which in turn facilitates acquiring higher jobs and political positions, and thus access to material goods.

*Vigilance.* While this function was obviously more important when the regime was less well consolidated, the “mass organizations,” and particularly the CDRs, continue to engage in these types of activities. They are responsible for keeping an eye on real or suspected political and social deviance. At various times, the CDRs have helped to implement repressive laws that

have been passed and enforced with varying degrees of rigor according to changing circumstances. One such repressive law was passed in 1970. This was the “anti-loafing” bill that made work compulsory with recidivists subject to prison terms.<sup>5</sup>

**“Andres Glez Lines” Fishing Institute “Alecrin” School  
of Technical Qualification**

Verification Form of the C.D.R. (Local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution)

Father's Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Mother's Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

E.S.B. \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

(1) Participation in tasks (vigilance, voluntary work performed in the neighborhood and in the countryside, participation in meetings, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Social and moral conduct: \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Does he associate with persons who are not sympathetic to the revolution? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Do you know if the comrade holds religious beliefs? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

(5) Does he maintain relations with persons abroad? From what country? \_\_\_\_\_

(6) Does he have relatives in prison or convicted of a crime? Type of crime and relationship to the applicant. \_\_\_\_\_

(7) What are his relationships like with the block (close) neighbors? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

(8) Does the comrade associate with anti-social elements? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the (local) Committee for the Defense of the Revolution \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name of informant \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Member of UJC (Union of Communist Youth) or of PCC (Cuban Communist Party) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of verifier \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE TO THE VERIFIER**

The candidate must be cleared by more than one member of the C.D.R.

Source: Carlos Alberto Montaner *Secret Report on the Cuban Revolution*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books 1981.

## II

Does all of this mean that there are no differences whatsoever between Cuba and the USSR? Not at all. The fact that these two countries share the same basic mode of production and even political organization does not mean that they are identical, anymore than the U.S., Japan and Sweden are identical, even though they are all capitalist and have bourgeois democratic political systems. In part, the differences between Cuba and the USSR are simply due to age—time makes a difference in the process of crystallization of any social structure, capitalist or Stalinist. Furthermore, unlike most East European societies, the Cuban leadership came to power as a result of the success of a home grown revolutionary<sup>6</sup> movement, and not as the outcome of foreign military invasion. In this light, we can understand why Cuban Stalinism is more inclined to methods of controlled mass mobilizations, and is more interested in real and/or feigned exhibitions of mass support than its East European counterparts.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, we find certain relative "advantages" for the people in some of the East European Stalinist societies. Thus, for example, leaders of the Polish KOR—an essential ingredient in the later development of Solidarity—were jailed and otherwise repressed throughout the Seventies, but KOR was still able to function and survive. It is highly unlikely that such a type of development would be allowed to endure in today's Cuba. The harsher conditions of youthful revolutionary Stalinism in Cuba make it all the more imperative to insist that political rights and freedoms are no less necessary for the Cuban workers and nation than they are for the Poles.

The question arises, why the refusal of so many on the Left to face up to these Cuban realities—the illusion that "Poder Popular" can be an authentic expression of genuine mass popular power in the absence of the most elementary rights of freedom of information, speech, press and assembly. In my view, such an assumption makes a total farce of the very notions of socialism and democracy. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid calling Cuba a totalitarian country. Although an unpopular term for understandable reasons, since it has been widely used for Cold War purposes, nonetheless I believe it accurately describes Cuba's political system. It is an undemocratic one-party state that basically succeeds in controlling every form of organized social and political life in the country. This is required if the bureaucratic class that rules over the nation's political economy is to maintain the system and stay in power.

The lack of democracy in Cuba is expressed in various ways such as in the domestic economic and political spheres discussed above (resulting in retardation of the much needed economic development). But many other basic issues are kept out of reach of the people. Take the matter of Angola, for example. The most basic facts about that war—which in terms of the island's population has been equivalent to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam—have been withheld from the Cuban people. Cubans know nothing concerning the extent of the country's resources employed in that war. Racist South Africa and the reactionary UNITA know a lot more about Cuban war casualties than the Cuban people are informed about. Neither have the Cuban people been informed that Angola, with or without justification, has not nationalized U.S. oil, and that Cuban troops are essential in maintaining the security of U.S. installations there. Similarly, the Cuban press has said nothing about the role of racial conflicts inside the Angolan ruling party, nor about the role of Cuba in favoring the Neto group against the defeated Alves faction within the MPLA. The same lack of information about what are *political* rather than security matters prevails in relation to the Cuban role in the wars in Eritrea and Ethiopia.<sup>8</sup> The Cuban people are asked to support wars about which they are not allowed to know very basic facts.

Finally, every kind of dissent has been effectively stamped out by the Castro regime, including those of non-official Communist and leftist perspectives. Among countless incidents, I will merely note the following: in the mid-Sixties, Castro broke with the Chinese in part because, according to Castro, they had tried to propagandize in the Cuban Army. The regime assumed that political propaganda was the monopoly

of the Cuban Communist Party, and that the Chinese had engaged in activity equivalent to previous U.S. imperialist influence and control in Cuba.<sup>9</sup> In 1968, old Stalinist Anibal Escalante was purged for a second time and sentenced to fifteen years in prison for what was fundamentally no more serious a crime than organizing a discussion group (the so-called microfaction) that analyzed the shortcomings of the Cuban economy from an orthodox Soviet perspective.<sup>10</sup> Purges and persecutions have also been carried out against proponents of Black Power<sup>11</sup> and, of course, gays.<sup>12</sup> Earlier, in 1961, the political literary weekly supplement of the government newspaper *Revolución* was also suppressed.<sup>13</sup> *Lunes de Revolución*, an excellent mass circulation supplement, published a wide variety of leftist views ranging from populist to Stalinist and revolutionary socialist (e.g. Leon Trotsky). One of its favorite authors was Jean Paul Sartre. It is quite inconceivable that today's Cuban press would carry, for example, an open and multi-sided discussion of the Eurocommunist program of the Spanish Communist Party, even though Spain in general, and its Communist Party in particular, have had strong historic links with Cuba.

Within the last four years, a considerable number of prominent Cuban artists have gone into exile. These include such well known people as writers Heberto Padilla, Reinaldo Arenas, Edmundo Desnoes, Antonio Benitez Rojo, Belkis Cuza Malé,<sup>14</sup> and musicians Paquito de Rivera and Daniel Ponce. The case of Edmundo Desnoes is perhaps the most instructive. Desnoes, the author of the book *Inconsolable Memories*<sup>15</sup> (the basis for the screenplay of the well-known Cuban film *Memories of Underdevelopment*) left Cuba in late 1979. He has since published a major anthology of post-revolutionary Cuban literature with a prologue and epilogue written from a very mildly dissenting but most definitely pro-regime position. It is worth noting that Mr. Desnoes is currently teaching in Amherst, Mass., and that the book was published in Hanover, New Hampshire.<sup>16</sup>

What happened to Desnoes is graphic evidence that the possibility of open dissent does not exist in Cuba, and demonstrates the absurdity of a position of "critical support" for Castro. You can "critically support" the Cuban government in Paris, London and New England, but not in Havana, Cuba. As a matter of fact, you cannot even be for "uncritical support" in Havana, if this unqualified support were to be carried out by a group organizationally *independent* of the Cuban Communist Party, or if it were to be combined with, say, support for the Polish Solidarity movement. Although he didn't quite put it that way, Fred Denfert is a "critical supporter" of the Cuban regime.<sup>17</sup> I submit that *almost sixty years after the rise of Stalinism*, this is a politically unacceptable position. Even more objectionable is the position of a large number of foreign supporters of Castro who are quite aware that they would never consent to live under a Castro type system in their own countries, but are quite willing to support such a system *for somebody else!* Or, as Nobel prize winning writer and staunch supporter of the Castro regime, Gabriel García Márquez, living in Mexico exiled from his native Colombia, once told Alan Riding of *The New York Times*: "I could not live in Cuba because

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I haven't been through the process. It would be very difficult to arrive now and adapt myself to the conditions. I'd miss too many things. *I couldn't live with the lack of information. I am a voracious reader of newspapers and magazines from around the world.*<sup>18</sup>

That those who support Jaruzelski and Andropov also support the Cuban regime is hardly surprising; they are being consistent. In this particular context, Castro and the Cuban press, in supporting the invasion of Czechoslovakia and opposing Solidarity, are certainly clear headed and not contradicting themselves.<sup>19</sup> It is, however, a contradiction to support Solidarity and Castro as so many on the Left do. The advanced elements in Solidarity have demanded shopfloor democracy, complete freedom for the dissemination of different political views, and the rights of parties other than the C.P. to organize. Solidarity did not restrict itself to the particularistic demand for freedom of dissent within the Polish Communist Party. In any case, it is quite utopian to expect that there can be democracy inside the Party when it does not exist in society as a whole. These Solidarity positions also apply to Cuba. It is time to take the bull by the horns and reject the pseudo-Marxist arguments that have prevailed so long on the Left—from liberals and social democrats to a good number of revolutionary socialists: viz., the argument that economic underdevelopment and the economic and social crises caused by imperialist pressures, which are certainly real enough, justify the establishment of Stalinism. When we allow the argument that socio-economic circumstances require the abrogation of democratic institutions, we set the stage for the degeneration of revolution in the advanced countries as well. It is most unlikely that the capitalists will peacefully hand over an intact industrial plant and economic infrastructure to the working class and its allies. Unless we are very clear that the only way to organize a socialist society is to institutionalize the very broadest structures for democratic decision making, we will find that the pressures of the post-revolutionary period provide a compelling rationale for limiting participation, one-party rule and ultimately the emergence of totalitarian institutions.

It is educational, and most encouraging, to learn that Marxist dissidents in China sharply disagree with those who have reserved the benefits of socialist democracy for white folks in the "advanced" West. Thus, for example, Beijing dissident Hu Ping is reported as saying that "to have freedom of speech is not to have everything, but to lose freedom of speech is to lose everything; and that to recognize freedom of speech is not necessarily Marxist, but to deny freedom of speech is not even half Marxist."<sup>20</sup> These remarks by Hu Ping, like this entire article, are elementary notions pertaining to the ABCs of Marxism. And yet, so profound is the crisis of revolutionary Marxism that they almost sound unfamiliar. At this very low and critical point some very basic points of departure must be reestablished. It is not necessary to have a worked out blueprint for a democratic alternative in order to firmly reject Stalinism whether in its First, Second or Third World varieties. After all, Marx had developed a clear and forthright position vis a vis Capitalism in *The Communist Manifesto* before he had developed a true scientific analysis of the then new exploitative system.

Meanwhile, the international Left has, on the whole, abandoned the field to Cold Warriors and supporters of imperialism in protesting about the situation of political prisoners in Cuba. Although Castro set free several thousand political prisoners in 1979, Cuba still ranks very high among the nations in the Western Hemisphere in terms of the number and poor treatment of the political prisoners in its jails. Thus, according to Amnesty International, more than 50 political prisoners are known to have been re-sentenced during the past five years for refusing to wear prison uniforms (wearing civilian clothes was a well established tradition for political prisoners in pre-Castro Cuba) and to participate in "rehabilitation programs" Amnesty further commented on the situation of the *plantados*, that is, those prisoners who refuse to participate in political reeducation programs: "Conditions of the *plantados*' imprisonment deteriorated sharply in 1981. In protest against prison conditions, several *plantados* began a hunger strike. Cuban officials reportedly responded to this strike and other protests by withdrawing medical attention and visitation privileges. Some prisoners were also allegedly beaten by prison guards."<sup>21</sup>

### III

I would submit that as long as our discussions are dominated by the most elementary question of whether we are supporters (and what kind), or opponents of these regimes, we will never progress to a serious discussion of the incredibly difficult question of *how* to combat this new form of exploitative system. Since society and history, like nature, abhor a vacuum, the socialist failure to develop such a body of theory, strategy and tactics will have very grave consequences. That is, other forces—perhaps even outright reactionary forces—will provide the politics and direction to the future oppositions that will inevitably develop in the "socialist" part of the world. The strength of the Right wing KPN (Confederation of Independent Poland), and the discredit of the international Left, Marxism and socialism in Poland, should be a warning signal to all of us.

It is also not too late to realize that the most militant and principled opposition to U.S. imperialism (including its numerous activities designed to overthrow the Cuban regime), does not oblige us to approve of or support Stalinist regimes. Let us go back to an earlier spirit, when Marxist socialism meant revolutionary opposition to all of the world's ruling classes, or if you prefer, "classes and elites" (this is not a critical distinction when one is deciding the most elementary question of "which side are you on")■

June 14, 1983

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> From the extensive report by Susana Lee, "Third Regular Session of National Assembly of People's Power held," *Granma Weekly Review*, January 9, 1983, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Hal Draper, "The Dynamics of Bureaucratic Collectivism," in *Bureaucratic Collectivism. The Stalinist Social System*, Sun Press, 1974, pp. 41-2. Available from Sun Press,

17300 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48203. See also a related and similar observation by Chinese Marxist dissident Wang Xishe in "Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution," Gregor Benton, ed., *Wild Lilies, Poisonous Weeds. Dissident Voices from People's China*, London, England: Pluto Press, 1982, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Fidel Castro speech to the 2nd. Congress of the Federation of University Students. *Granma Weekly Review*, January 2, 1983, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> People who are known to be practicing Catholics are discriminated against in employment and higher education. Catholic religious services are legal and allowed inside the churches, but the traditional religious street processions are forbidden. Jehovah Witnesses and other "sectarians" have even fewer rights than Catholics and must practice their religion in secret.

<sup>5</sup> See the article by Maxine Valdés and Nelson P. Valdés, "Cuban Workers and the Revolution," *New Politics*, v. viii, no. 4, Fall 1970.

<sup>6</sup> I am using the word "revolution" in a descriptive manner to refer to the complete transformation of a social system. Used in this fashion, the word does not imply that the new social system is necessarily progressive.

<sup>7</sup> It is relevant to point out that income differentials in Cuba are narrower than before the Revolution although this is a separate issue from whether the majority of the population is actually better off than in 1959. The latter is the pertinent standard of comparison. To claim that today's Cuba is economically superior to many other underdeveloped countries, even though this was also true before the Revolution, is disingenuous to say the least. It is my rough estimate that the poorest 1/3 of the population is better off than twenty four years ago, and that the better off 2/3 is either worse off or has not obtained any net material gains since then. I would include most of the urban working class within this latter group. (Cuba has for a long time been more urban than rural, and more than 50% of its labor force was unionized before the Revolution). Specifically, improvements have taken place in the areas of health, education, social security and almost full employment. On the other hand, housing, food, transportation, public utilities and consumer goods have considerably deteriorated since the Revolution. For further discussion of these issues see the accounts of my visit to Cuba in late 1979 in *Changes* (Detroit, Michigan), July/August 1980, and in *Critique* (Glasgow, Scotland) No. 13. See also Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *The Economy of Socialist Cuba: A Two-Decade Appraisal*, Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1981.

<sup>8</sup> For very useful source materials on Cuba's role in Africa see Carmelo Mesa-Lago and June S. Belkin (eds.), *Cuba in Africa*, Center for Latin American Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1982.

<sup>9</sup> Maurice Halperin, *The Taming of Fidel Castro*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, pp. 202-204.

<sup>10</sup> Maurice Halperin, op. cit., pp. 271-6.

<sup>11</sup> Such was the experience of black Cuban leader Walterio Carbonell, Castro's former ambassador to Algeria. U.S. black leaders Eldridge Cleaver and Robert Williams also had to leave Cuba because their views differed from those of the Cuban leadership.

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 4 "Sexual Deviance: Homosexuals and the Revolution" in Luis Salas, *Social Control and Deviance in Cuba*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979, pp. 150-177. The present Cuban government has the distinction of being the first in the history of the island to make homosexuality a public issue. Previous governments just ignored the question. Widespread discrimination and ridicule was "quietly" carried out in the various spheres of civil society. This is certainly one case where politicization made things worse rather than better.

<sup>13</sup> Maurice Halperin, *The Rise and Decline of Fidel Castro*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, pp. 247-254.

<sup>14</sup> Several of these former leftist writers are currently publishing and writing for *Linden Lane Magazine* (available from 134 Glen Avenue, Millburn, New Jersey, 07040). Unfortu-

nately, this magazine, edited by Heberto Padilla and Belkis Cuza Malé, seems to be considerably influenced by Cold War liberalism. This is a pattern common among Polish and other East European former leftist intellectuals as well. This is, in part, an expression of bitterness towards the Western Left, where the influence of Stalinoid politics is evident. Pro-Castro attitudes are widespread on the left, although more so in the U.S. than in Western Europe. Of course, there is a very honorable minority who do not share this attitude consisting of several small socialist groups, independents and significant sections of the Gay movement. The Left reaction to the heavily working-class 1980 Mariel emigration is instructive. Many gay organizations responded splendidly to help resettle the thousands of Cuban homosexuals that had arrived in the U.S.A. Most of the left, however, was unsympathetic. The coverage of *In These Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, and *The Progressive* was disgraceful. Even the pro-Zionist, pro-Cold War *New Republic* carried an article at this time by historian John Womack defending the Cuban regime.

<sup>15</sup> Edmundo Desnoes, *Inconsolable Memories*, translated by the author. Foreword by Jack Gelber. London: André Deutsch, 1968.

<sup>16</sup> Edmundo Desnoes (with Willi Luis), *Los Dispositivos en la Flor. Cuba: literatura desde la revolución*, Hanover, New Hampshire: Ediciones del Norte, P.O. Box A 130, Hanover, New Hampshire, U.S.A.

<sup>17</sup> However, Denfert's critique also seems to indicate that the Mandeliste wing of the Fourth International is taking a closer look at Cuba and adopting a much more critical stance towards Castro. This is to be welcomed. For too many years, the majority of people who call themselves Trotskyists, have grossly distorted the nature of Cuban life, sometimes doing so to an even greater extent than the average Stalinist. It seemed as if the greater the gap between many Trotskyists' professed political principles and Cuban reality, the more distortions and fantasies were needed to fill the gap. While these distortions and fantasies are hardly unique to the Trotskyist Left, there is still a critical difference: for Trotskyists this has represented, ever since the late Forties, a retreat and change of direction from an earlier uncompromising opposition to Stalinism. See Duncan Hallas, "The Fourth International in Decline: From Trotskyism to Pablistism," *International Socialism*, No. 60, July 1973 (London, England) and Hal Draper, "Comrade Tito and the Fourth International," *The New Internationalist*, September, 1948, New York.

<sup>18</sup> Alan Riding, "For García Márquez, Revolution is a Major Theme," *The New York Times*, Thursday, May 22, 1980. Emphasis Mine.

<sup>19</sup> There are those who would argue that Castro's position on these issues can be explained as a response to the pressures placed by the USSR on the Cuban regime. This interpretation has one curious aspect: it does not take at all seriously the politics and ideas of the Cuban leadership. But, more important, it ignores the fact that Castro's speech supporting the invasion of Czechoslovakia was highly critical of the Soviet Union and the other East European "socialist" countries. This was not a pro-Russian speech but rather a Stalinist-type pronouncement. See *Granma Weekly Review*, year 3, no. 34 (August 25, 1968). See also the report of Raúl Castro's visit to Warsaw in early 1983 and his total and uncritical support for the Jaruzelski regime. *Granma Weekly Review*, January 23, 1983, page 3.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Yang Jing, a member of the left-wing of the Chinese democracy movement in Gregor Benton (ed.), op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> *Matchbox*, February 1983. This is a newspaper published by Amnesty International in New York City. On March 15, 1983, Amnesty International also issued an appeal on behalf of five young Cubans sentenced to death after being charged, with twelve others, with committing "industrial sabotage." In this appeal, Amnesty International also mentioned "unconfirmed reports" that these seventeen people were trying to organize an independent trade union.



# WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LENINISM?

by Jim Devine

In the late 1960's, the new US left discovered Marxism, revolution and the need for a Socialist Party. But more than a decade later, we see no large section of US society advocating revolutionary change. Nor is there any revolutionary organization with significant roots in workplaces and communities. Some have responded to this problem by pretending that it doesn't exist, declaring *themselves* to be "the Party" and claiming to speak in the name of the working class. Others have looked at the odds and have postponed the building of a revolutionary movement until after social democracy (or liberalism) is installed in the state or the trade union bureaucracy.

For those concerned with fighting these elitist and defeatist conceptions, John Molyneux's *Marxism and the Party*<sup>1</sup> provides a good start for study and debate. Molyneux describes the contributions to the theory of revolutionary organization by Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Gramsci. Though the book is well written and usually avoids over-simplification and ahistorical analysis, it also has major blindspots primarily concerning the issues of internal democracy and feminism. In

this review, I first summarize and extend Molyneux's major strong point, his views on the relationship between the party and the working class, and then turn to these blindspots. Thus I will consider only the contributions of Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and the feminist critics in any depth.

At the turn of the century, a debate arose within the international socialist movement over the major problems of the theory of revolutionary organization. This debate was prompted by silences in Karl Marx's work. His fundamental political premise was that "the emancipation of the working class must be won by the working class itself." Further, he argued that the dynamics of cap-

\*Thanks to Bob Brenner, Mitchell Schoen, Steve Zeluck, and David DeLeeuw for their comments on previous drafts. But I alone am responsible for the views expressed.



italism would create the conditions encouraging the development of organizations of the working class as a whole—not subordinated in alliances with other classes—so that the working class could take power and set up socialism. It is true that mass parties of the working class sprang up during the late 19th century. But these parties suffered from diseases largely unanalyzed by Marx: first, the rise of working-class reformism where working class organizations merely fight for a larger share of the pie within capitalism without organizing to abolish that system, and second, bureaucratic rule of those organizations by permanent officials.

Marx did not sufficiently analyze the forces blocking the development of class and socialist consciousness. Nor did he examine the problems of internal organization in any depth. Though he had some inkling of these problems, he saw no need for organization of revolutionaries independent of the mass working-class party (except in the exceptional "March Address" of 1848).

## Lenin's Contribution

Over the period between the publication of *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) and the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, Vladimir Lenin developed an answer to the problem of organizational reformism, and a new view of the relationship of revolutionaries to the working class. By 1917, he saw the revolutionary party as an organization of the consistently revolutionary section of the working class, which participates in broader working class institutions from trade unions to soviets (workers' councils) in order to win the masses to a revolutionary program. To Lenin, the task of the revolutionary group is to offer a clear-cut ideological and organizational alternative to the reformist ideas and institutions that dominate the labor movement outside of revolutionary periods. It strives to uphold the interests of the working class as a whole rather than those of any particular section and works above all to develop a strategy to overcome divisions. To carry out its tasks, the party tries to provide practical leadership in every struggle. It links the defensive struggles of the working class—for reforms and the strengthening of mass organizations—to the process of building a political and organizational base for revolution. Purist abstentionism should be rejected, since that isolates revolutionaries from the working class, as should acting "in the name of" the working class. From all of this springs the key organizational characteristics of Lenin's conception of the party: a close watch on the boundaries of the party, a commitment to political action by all members, unity in action, and inner-party democracy.

To call this Lenin's conception of the party will surprise those anarchists, liberals, social democrats, and Stalinists who identify Lenin's views with those of Stalin. This confusion is usually accomplished by ignoring Lenin's actions and writings on the party after *What Is to Be Done?* as well as a partial reading of that book. *What Is to Be Done?* was a polemic against economism (the subordination of political organization and goals to spontaneous and narrow trade union struggles) heavily influenced by the German social-democratic leader Kautsky. In 1907, Lenin noted that this book "is a controversial correction of 'economist' distortions and it would be wrong to regard it in any other light."<sup>2</sup>

In *What Is to Be Done?* Lenin had two different, though similar-sounding, explanations for the role of revolutionary organization. First, he asserted that "political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only outside the economic struggle."<sup>3</sup> This summarizes Lenin's critique of economism. Workers need to understand the totality of social relations and forms of oppression, but this knowledge does not spring automatically from the narrow struggle with the boss over wages and conditions.

Linked to this critique of economism, however, is a second view. He quotes approvingly from Kautsky, the "pope of Marxism":

The vehicles of science are not the proletariat but the bourgeois intelligentsia: it was in the minds of some members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduced it into the proletarian class struggle. (Kautsky's emphasis.)<sup>4</sup>

This statement—and its identification with Lenin's views—is the theoretical justification for the elitist partyism (or vanguardism) of many "Leninist" groups of both the Stalinist and Trotskyist varieties. Partyism (my word, not Molyneux's) sees the Party—rather than the working class and other oppressed groups—as the primary conscious actor in the revolutionary process. The Party provides the brains, the working class only the brawn. The Party will emancipate the working class if that class is good enough to follow it.<sup>5</sup> In this perspective, the correct Line or Program attains a magical quality: it is the lever, which, rested on the fulcrum of the working class, allows the Party to move the world.

But Lenin dropped this second, Kautskyite, view. When the Russian working class rose up against the Czar in 1905 and created new forms of workers' power—especially the soviets—unforeseen by Marxist intellectuals, Lenin revised his previous elitist views.<sup>6</sup> Against Kautsky's one-sided view, Lenin wrote

There is not the slightest doubt that the revolution will teach social-democratism [socialism] to the masses in Russia . . .

At such a time the working class feels an instinctive urge for open revolutionary action.<sup>7\*</sup>

He now worries about the status of the party:

the question that now confronts a militant political party is: shall we be able to teach the revolution anything?<sup>8</sup>

In 1905, Lenin had to wage a battle against the partyist conceptions—ironically derived from his own writings—which were predominant among the Bolsheviks. Under the influence of the party's full-time organizers, the "committeemen," the Bolsheviks at first abstained from participating in the soviets created in the revolution. Lenin pushed to have this position reversed, so that the group "opened the gates" to masses of workers who developed revolutionary politics. Lenin favored a politically narrow party, but only as long as most of the working class remained non-revolutionary. He thought it absolutely critical to construct a mass revolutionary party when possible—as in 1905, in the periods of mass strikes between 1912 and 1914, and in 1917. In the last analysis, Lenin saw the party as a complement—though indispensable—to the workers' councils in the revolution. So the Bolsheviks' slogan in October 1917 was not "All Power to the Party!" but, "All Power to the Soviets!"

\*Before 1914, the phrase "social democracy" did not have any reformist connotations.

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In sum, Lenin recognized that working class consciousness develops unevenly and that it is therefore necessary to organize the revolutionary layer into a party. He ultimately saw that to confine the revolutionary section of the class by keeping it within the mass reformist (social-democratic) parties is to prevent it from carrying out revolutionary politics. This concept is consistent with Marx's principle of working-class self-emancipation, since the party plays only the role of a catalyst and educator within the working class, not of a substitute for the class as a whole.

This is not to say that Lenin broke completely with *What Is to Be Done?* He held firm to the view that "without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement"<sup>9</sup> and that intellectuals can play an indispensable role in codifying and systematizing workers' consciousness and giving it scientific formulation. However, whereas early on Lenin had contrasted this view to Marx's dictum that "A single step of the real movement is more important than a dozen programs,"<sup>10</sup> he came to see the two as complementary. It is true that coherent Marxist theory often comes from "bourgeois intellectuals." But unless this theory is developed in relationship to the practical needs of the mass movement—and the views and experiences of the workers—it remains abstract and inadequate, often elitist, academic, or sectarian. "Correct revolutionary theory," wrote Lenin, "assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly revolutionary movement."<sup>11</sup> Lenin never abandoned his critique of economism, nor his view that the party is needed to overcome the narrowness of most spontaneous upsurges. But he rejected the notion that the revolutionary intelligentsia could provide a magical antidote to reformism among the working class.

### Some Problems: Internal Democracy

After 1919, the civil war, the demoralization and partial destruction of the working class, imperialist invasion, economic collapse, and the turn of the peasantry against the revolution confronted the Bolsheviks with a hangman's choice: Abandon democratic practices or surrender to White Terror! Many Bolsheviks felt they had no alternative but to ban other political parties and even factions within the Bolshevik party in order to protect the revolution.

But Molyneux has ignored Lenin's post-1917 writings and actions, thus avoiding some difficult questions about the theory of a revolutionary party. I will limit my discussion here to just one of these, the issue of factions since I believe Molyneux's book downplays issues of internal democracy. Many "marxist-leninists" claim that the bans on the opposition and internal factions are virtues. But this view is indefensible either in theory or in historical practice.

The justification for allowing factions can be found in both the Bolsheviks' practice and Lenin's writings. Throughout their existence the Bolsheviks had developed their political perspective through intense, often organized, internal, that is, factional, struggles. Indeed, the Bolsheviks *started* as a faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. There were factions even during the October Revolution (Zinoviev and Kamenev versus Lenin) and in moments of dire emergency (as at the

time of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk). The ability to develop *by means of* thorough examination of competing viewpoints, and then to unite around the democratically arrived at decision, had been one of the Bolshevik's great sources of strength. The Bolsheviks did decide to ban factions in 1921—but only as a temporary step necessitated, they thought, by grave conditions. As is well known even after they were banned, factions existed, including one of Lenin and Trotsky against Stalin.<sup>12</sup> And as Lenin wrote at about the time of the ban:

But if deep, fundamental disagreements of principle exist, we may be told: 'Do they not justify the sharpest factional actions?' Naturally they justify it, if the disagreements are really deep, and if the rectification of the wrong policy of the party of the working class cannot be obtained.<sup>13</sup>

This is hardly a categorical rejection of factions or inner-party democracy.

The right of faction is critical to the protection of inner-party democracy and is indispensable to unity of action. (This is especially so because of the common tendency for a group's leadership to become an informal faction presenting a unified front to the membership.) The members, especially minorities, *must feel* that their positions will be given a *serious* hearing by the group and that their positions will be decided upon democratically, i.e., that there is more than a mere formal possibility that they can become a majority. Otherwise, they can hardly be expected to go along with the group's final decision. So people must be allowed to organize for their views and, if necessary, to form a faction. To artificially outlaw such organizing will not prevent disagreements, but will only drive them underground and promote the tendency toward splits. There is, of course, no reason to actually want factions, especially permanent factions. Their existence is a symptom of ill-health of an organization, of serious and permanent disagreements. But to ban them is to treat the symptom and not the disease.

The issue of factions brings us to an even more decisive problem. If the organization treats its own rank and file as mere tools to be used in political action, it is likely that workers *outside* will be treated in a similar fashion. And workers do not trust a group that is not open to argument. It is not enough to quote Lenin's definition of "democratic centralism" as "unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism."<sup>14</sup> This abstract formula needs to be made more specific. This is especially true since Lenin never wrote a pamphlet on party democracy to repudiate some of his early writings. These have been highly influential and include the following gem, admittedly from 1904, from *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (1904):

Bureaucracy versus democracy is precisely the same thing as centralism versus autonomism: it is the organizational principle of revolutionary Social-Democracy as opposed to the organizational principle of opportunist Social-Democracy. The latter strive to proceed from the bottom upward, and therefore, wherever possible and as far as possible, uphold autonomism, 'democracy,' which is carried (by those who are zealous beyond reason), to the point of anarchism. The former strive to proceed from the top downward, and uphold an extension of the rights and powers of the center in relation to the parts.<sup>15</sup>

Seldom has such an explicit defense of bureaucracy been seen in Marxism, except by those who actually control bureaucracies. It should be rejected by all Marxists.

Molyneux neither quotes nor analyzes the above. Thus he avoids answering the critics of Lenin. It also over-simplifies Lenin, since he later advocated allowing factions (quite the opposite of bureaucratic centralism). To ignore Lenin's early defense of bureaucracy makes it impossible to understand Luxemburg's polemic against Lenin and her major contribution to the theory of the party.

## Luxemburg's Contribution

To Molyneux, Rosa Luxemburg's contribution "is a useful weapon only insofar as it is integrated into the framework of Leninism. But as an *alternative* to Leninism, Luxemburgism must be judged invalid" (p. 116, his emphasis). This conclusion reflects once again Molyneux's slighting of internal issues. Luxemburg's view of inner-group problems is much more profound than Lenin's scattered writings. Molyneux's conclusion only applies (and there only partially) to Luxemburg's view of the relationship between the party and the working class.

Luxemburg's *Organizational Questions of Social Democracy* (1904) is a strong attack on Lenin's suggestion (quoted above) that bureaucratic centralism is a cure for the opportunism of many intellectuals. Through her experience with the centralism of the German Social Democratic Party she concluded that rigid centralism does not ensure correctness:

More important is the fundamental falseness of the idea underlying the plan of unqualified centralism—the idea that the road to opportunism can be barred by means of clauses in the party constitution. . . . [Rather] the social democracy must enclose the nonproletarian [elements]. . . within the revolutionary action of the proletariat. It must assimilate the elements that come to it. This is only possible if the social democracy already contains a strong, politically educated *proletarian nucleus* class conscious enough to be able, as up to now in Germany, to pull along in its tow the declassed and petty bourgeois elements. . . .<sup>16</sup>

Ultimately, the only antidote to opportunism in a revolutionary group is to have a working-class base, and not a passive one, but a strong, politically educated, and class-conscious one. A group is highly dependent on the self-activity, education, and consciousness of the working class.

Note that Luxemburg did not reject group discipline as such (as some of her followers believe). She writes:

greater strictness in the application of the principle of centralism and more severe discipline, specifically formulated in party by-laws, may be an effective safeguard against the opportunist danger.<sup>17</sup>

But her conception of discipline is fundamentally different from that of *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*:

We misuse words. . . when we apply the same word—discipline—to such dissimilar notions as 1) the absence of thought and will in a body with a thousand automatically moving hands and legs, and 2) the spontaneous co-ordination of the conscious political acts of a body of men. What is there in common between the regulated docility of an oppressed class and the self-discipline and organization of a class struggling for its emancipation?<sup>18</sup>

Here is the distinction between discipline from above—by a capitalist or a bureaucrat—and discipline from below, agreed upon collectively and democratically by the rank and file. Lenin's early equation of bureaucracy with centralism and democracy with autonomism (or anarchy) is rejected. So we see the distinction between

bureaucratic centralism (what's usually called "democratic centralism") and truly democratic centralism.

What does this distinction mean in practice? Cases of bureaucratic centralism are familiar. There is the cult of the leader (Bob Avakian springs to mind), the military-style hierarchy, and the emphasis on making the group into an organizational weapon. But real democratic centralism is more difficult to find. Even groups historically devoted to internal democracy (such as the International Socialists) experienced bureaucratization and authoritarian methods of leadership during the 1970s. What can we do? Allowing for factions helps. So will clarity about what is meant by "discipline": anyone who makes a commitment to join a group can be held responsible for his or her actions *in the name of the group*. And we should learn from Luxemburg: "discipline" should be imposed below, not from above. The leadership, which most represents the group to the outside world, must be the most (not the least) accountable to the group.

## Some Problems: Party and Class

A clear commitment to democracy from below is central to Luxemburg's contribution to the organization question. But, as Molyneux suggests, her view of the party/class relationship is muddled and inferior to Lenin's. Like Marx, she failed to cope adequately with the problem of the uneven development of class and socialist consciousness. For example, in one paragraph of *Organizational Questions*, she runs together two very different conceptions of the party:

social democracy is not joined to the proletariat. It is itself the proletariat. . . . [Social-democratic centralism is] the self-centralism of the advanced sectors of the proletariat.<sup>19</sup>

Lenin's conception (developed fully only later) was that the advanced sectors of the working class needed their own organization separate from the mass organizations. Only in this way could they organize around an independent revolutionary program without interference from the reformists.

Luxemburg placed a greater emphasis on working-class spontaneity than Lenin did. This is exemplified by her conception of the mass strike, particularly the strike wave in Russia in 1905. A more recent one occurred in Poland in 1980. In a mass strike, the economic narrowness of normal trade unionism is broken; since it shakes up the political situation, workers are able to make giant leaps forward in their political understanding in a very short period of time.

Though derived from the Russian situation, Luxemburg's analysis aimed to solve the specific problems of German social democracy. Though there was a high degree of class consciousness among the workers, bureaucracies dominated the Party and the trade unions and could be expected to oppose any independent working class activity, especially mass strikes. (Strikes were to be orchestrated from above.) Luxemburg thus placed great importance on working class spontaneity to break through the conservatism of the bureaucracy.

That does not mean that Luxemburg rejected organization. Rather, she saw organization as indispensable and emphasized the importance of education and propaganda, especially during a mass strike. Nevertheless, although she understood the problems of the uneven and discontinuous development of working

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class consciousness and the efforts of established officials to undermine any mass upsurge, she did not, prior to 1917, conclude that revolutionaries needed a *separate* organization. Luxemburg stayed in the German Social Democratic Party right up to the German Revolution of 1918-19. Within the Party she led an ideological tendency that propagandized against the leadership, but did no independent organizing. She *did* see that revolutionaries must prepare themselves to provide leadership in revolutionary situations. But she did not see that to be able to do this, it was necessary to organize during the non-revolutionary periods. Because of opposition from officials to such preparatory work, the revolutionaries must first organize themselves independently of the established mass organizations. This allows greater freedom and flexibility. This does not mean separation from the masses. Rather, it means working outside of "normal channels" when possible, avoiding constraints and co-optation that occur within established power structures.

Ultimately, Luxemburg did come to see the need for an organization of revolutionaries which could both agitate and provide ideological leadership. She was, after all, the founder of the German C.P. But her views were not merely an adjunct of "Leninism." As noted before, her view of organizational democracy was more profound. Moreover, she was much more explicit in her espousal of Marx's principle of working-class self-liberation:

errors committed by a truly revolutionary working class movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee.<sup>20</sup>

### Ackerman-Boyte vs. Luxemburg

The debate between Lenin and Luxemburg on the relationship between a revolutionary group and the existing movements is relevant today. One example is useful. In 1973, Frank Ackerman and Harry Boyte published "Revolution and Democracy," an article which in many ways was the central document of the New American Movement.<sup>21</sup> Though sometimes very perceptive this article suffers from, as Bill Kononen noted, "confusion about the relations between a socialist organization, the working class, and autonomous working class organizations."<sup>22</sup> That is, like Luxemburg, only a very flimsy line was drawn between the organization and the movement. What did this mean in practice? In NAM, there were seldom rules requiring members to be active. Thus there were often paper members, who nevertheless voted on crucial issues. Non-members sometimes helped make important decisions for the organization, such as the content of the *East Bay Voice*, a NAM newspaper in Oakland. All of this implied that only very weak efforts were made to analyze and co-ordinate collective action. In Oakland, the *Voice* was almost completely independent of NAM though it claimed to speak for the organization.

Like the leadership, the public face—the newspaper or magazine—of an organization must be subject to group control. (This does not mean that it must always print the "line," since debate is useful and positions may not be totally settled.) If clear organizational lines are not drawn, if some sort of collective (centralist) unity is not attempted, democracy becomes impossible. If everybody does his or her own thing, we get not democracy, but a situation in which everybody, in effect, dictates to

everybody else, as the *Voice* dictated to the rest of the NAM chapter. Again, this suggests that centralism and democracy are not opposites, nor are centralism and bureaucracy synonymous: discipline or centralism means that no one can act or talk in the name of the group without collective consent.

Also, in retrospect, Kononen's conclusion to his critique of Boyte and Ackerman turns out to be very accurate:

Boyte and Ackerman's proposal for a network of working-class institutions has the same weakness as a proposal containing the majority of workers. Such formations will invariably become a combination of interest groups indistinguishable from the left wing of the Democratic Party, incapable of providing strategic direction.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, we have seen NAM progressively lose its bearings, so that the majority merged into the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, whose central leadership consider themselves a "socialist" wing of the Democratic Party.

### Trotsky's Analysis of Substitutionism

As suggested before, an organization's internal relations and external relations are not independent of each other. How then does Luxemburg's view of internal democracy mesh with Lenin's analysis of party and class? Leon Trotsky's analysis of substitutionism makes this clear. It appears in his *Our Political Tasks* (1904), an unfortunately untranslated polemic against Lenin's early views.<sup>25</sup>

Lenin's organization, wrote Trotsky, would "substitute itself for the working class." This critique of partyism also applies to social democracy, though Trotsky didn't address this question. Both partyism and social democracy see their organizations as substitutes for conscious working-class action, as "representing" the class even though they're not under working control.

Trotsky saw substitutionism of this sort as analogous to, and connected with, internal substitutionism:

Lenin's methods lead to this: the party apparatus at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the apparatus; finally, a single 'dictator' substitutes himself for the Central Committee.<sup>26</sup>

This scenario applies best when an organization is isolated from active working class struggle, either because of defeat and demoralization of the movement or because of explicit policies of abstention. An example due to defeat of the movement was the bureaucratization of the Bolsheviks after 1919 or so. This process also occurred in US trade unions and European social democratic and communist parties after the end of working-class upsurges. In both cases, the disorganization of the working class allows the career needs of leaders to take charge.

The substitution of the party for the class as the key conscious actor in history is related to the problem of *internal* substitutionism (bureaucratic centralism). It is difficult to be democratic on one front and bureaucratic on the other for a long period of time. Giving orders or engaging in back-room deals is addictive, while disorganization of the working class encourages both.

The opposite of substitutionism—call it "liquidationism"—must also be avoided. That is, an organization

must not collapse into the mass movement. Leaders (though held responsible to the members) must be allowed to lead, to take some initiative. The "golden mean" between substitutionism and liquidationism depends on the concrete situation and can only be decided in practice, not by the application of some abstract formula.

Does Lenin's clear separation between the revolutionary group and the class as a whole encourage substitutionism? Not necessarily, since there is no reason for substitutionism to be more rampant in a small group than in a class-wide mass grouping. In fact, a smaller group is needed to fight against the substitutionism of trade union and other working-class leaders. For example, rank and file caucuses are needed in most unions to act as a counterweight to the bureaucratic power and as a forum for the concerns of ordinary workers.

Molyneux's avoidance of the issue of substitutionism is probably connected with his apparent view that internal issues are unimportant and his reluctance to criticize Lenin.<sup>27</sup> But Molyneux's perspective would improve dramatically with the incorporation of Trotsky's analysis. For example, on page 167, there is a substitutionist assertion that "the party is the collective memory and brain of the working class."

Because of his skipping of the analysis of substitutionism, Molyneux treats Trotsky as merely a follower and elaborator of Lenin. I will not summarize Molyneux's analysis here, except to note that his critique of the Trotskyist orthodoxy is excellent and principled. It is a good contribution to the growing literature on the critique of Trotskyism.

I will also skip over Molyneux's treatment of Antonio Gramsci and his cook-book style summary chapter.<sup>28</sup> Instead, I will turn to Molyneux's second major blindspot, the feminist critique of Leninism.

## The Feminist Contribution

Molyneux's framework, like that of far too many Leninists, is one-dimensional: all issues are reduced to class antagonisms. But the working class is not divided simply among "advanced" and "backward" sections, but also between men and women and among races. It is common for a worker to simultaneously be militant on "class struggle" issues but opposed to abortion rights. It is not enough to argue (following Lenin) that the revolutionary group should be the tribune of the people, championing the causes of all the oppressed. It is quite possible that such good intentions will founder on the reefs of "objective conditions" and short-term expedients. Just as Lenin argued that some organizational form was needed to avoid the traps of economism and the reformism of mass organizations, so must some practical or organizational form be given to *this* commitment. It is easy to go along with the dominant culture: why else are leftist groups so often dominated by white men, just like the capitalist and bureaucratic organizations we fight?

This issue is important since so much of the Leninist orthodoxy sneers at "bourgeois feminism," ignoring the positive elements of even the most middle-class components of the feminist movement, their struggle against patriarchy. It is too easy to assume that "what's good for the (white male) working class is good for women and non-whites"—the proletarian trickle-down theory.

But sexism and racism are very deeply rooted. Historically they preceded capitalism, while the experience of several revolutions shows that these institutions do not automatically wither away with the abolition of capitalism. Thus, Marxist-Feminists argue that patriarchy is as fundamental a system of domination as the capitalist mode of production.<sup>29</sup> White supremacy might also be part of the "base" instead of the "superstructure." Most white men gain concrete benefits from the existing system (such as having a wife to do shit work) and fight to maintain these privileges.

An important part of the solution can be seen by examining the role of women as an example. The liberation of women cannot be delayed to some later "stage"—rather, the base for women's liberation must be built now. Marx's principle of working-class self-liberation must be extended to women: women are the only force that can effect their liberation; though men must fight sexism wherever possible, women are the only force that can be relied upon in this fight. Thus, women's efforts to organize independently must be encouraged. The same goes for socialist organizations, since they have no special immunity to sexism: a democratically-run women's caucus is needed.<sup>30</sup> A "men against sexism" group might also be necessary. These principles need further discussion, especially if based on practical experience.<sup>31</sup> Similar principles apply to oppressed minorities such as blacks and gays.<sup>32</sup>

Sheila Rowbotham goes further in her critique of the Leninist orthodoxy.<sup>33</sup> Beyond the issues of internal democracy, other forms of oppression besides those of class, and the inability of an organization to easily escape patriarchal tradition, she focuses on the personal dimension. Following the feminist axiom that the personal—feelings and relationships—is political, she exposes what I'll call the mystique of revolutionary professionalism. This is the mystique of macho self-sacrifice, where "true" revolutionaries must be hard, self-contained, and lacking the time or ability to express emotions or to develop true friendships. (Friendships are merely among comrades or for recruitment purposes.) People who don't fit this image are weak and "petty bourgeois." Since only a small elite can live up to the standards of this mystique over a long period, leadership can become self-perpetuating despite democratic forms within the group. The turnover rate of the group's rank and file is high as the leadership decides who fits this image and as members "burn out."

Molyneux's ideal party fits this mystique: "Its membership must be active and self-sacrificial, and is likely therefore to be young" (p. 165). Given the length of the non-revolutionary period ahead, a group must have high turnover to keep its membership forever young. If so, how can the group maintain its long-term perspective? It can do so only if there is a hard core of old hands (old boys?) to act as the "collective memory and brain."

The mystique of revolutionary professionalism collapses when we realize that even the elite has emotions and motivations beyond building a mass socialist-feminist movement—often careerism.

Of course, Rowbotham fails to suggest any organizational answers to the hard questions of protracted struggle against capitalism, patriarchy, and racism, and the even harder question of state power. But this is beside

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the point; for an answer, we can rely on the thinkers surveyed above and on personal experience. Rowbotham is suggesting that it is not organizational innovations that are needed, but strong personal commitments to socialist-feminist practice ("process"). This process aims to create an atmosphere at meetings and forums that in-

<sup>1</sup> Pluto Press, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Molyneux, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> *What Is to Be Done?* (Peking, 1975), p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *What Is to Be Done?*, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> The common Kautskyite heritage is an important Intellectual link between social democracy and partyism.

<sup>6</sup> Besides Molyneux, Antonio Carlo ("Lenin on the Party," *Telos*, #17, Fall 1973) and Marcel Leibman ("Lenin in 1905," *Monthly Review*, #6, July-August, 1970) argue this point. See also Tony Cliff's four-volume biography *Lenin* (Pluto Press, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1979), especially vol. II, ch. 8, which describes the actual situation of the Bolsheviks in 1917. Even a non-Marxist historian notes that

in 1917 Lenin's prerevolutionary conception of a small, professional, conspiratorial party was discarded and the doors opened wide to tens of thousands of new members who were by no means without influence, so that to a significant degree the party was now responsive and open to the masses. (Alexander Rabinowich, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, W.W. Norton, 1976, p. xxi.)

<sup>7</sup> *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (Peking, 1965), pp. 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> *Two Tactics*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> *What Is to Be Done?*, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *What Is to Be Done?*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>11</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. . . . p. . . .

<sup>12</sup> See Max Schachtman, "The Struggle for the New Course," pp. 137-142, published with Leon Trotsky, *The New Course*, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1965; and Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, Monthly Review Press, 1968.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Schachtman, p. 142; see also V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32, p. 261.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Molyneux, p. 68.

<sup>15</sup> *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, Peking, 1976, pp. 255.

<sup>16</sup> *Organizational Questions of Social Democracy*, in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, Mary-Alice Waters, ed., Pathfinder Press, 1970, pp. 127-8.

<sup>17</sup> *Organizational Questions*, p. 128.

<sup>18</sup> *Organizational Questions*, p. 119.

<sup>19</sup> *Organizational Questions*, p. 119.

<sup>20</sup> *Organizational Questions*, p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Ackerman and Harry Boyte, "Revolution and Democracy," *Socialist Revolution*, #16, 1973.

creases people's confidence in thinking and acting for themselves instead of relying on old ideas and established leaders. Though a group should not be a mere social club or therapy group (losing sight of revolutionary goals) it should aim to increase the ability of people to withstand the long haul and avoid "burn out"■

<sup>22</sup> Reply to Ackerman and Boyte, *Socialist Revolution*, #17.

<sup>23</sup> Reply to Ackerman and Boyte.

<sup>24</sup> NAM's story is more complicated. See for example, David Smith "After the Fall," *Solidarity Discussion Bulletin*, April, 1981.

<sup>25</sup> I rely upon Antonio Carlo, "Trotsky and the Organization Problem," *Critique* #7, Winter 1976/7; Tony Cliff, "Trotsky on Substitutionism," in Cliff, Hallas, Harman, and Trotsky, *Party and Class*, Pluto Press: no date; and Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, Vintage, pp. 89-93.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Deutscher, p. 90. For clarity, I have substituted "apparatus" for "organization."

<sup>27</sup> It may be that Molyneux avoids the issue of substitutionism because Trotsky himself repudiated his early opposition to Lenin. But we must avoid equating opposition to substitutionism to Trotsky's pre-1917 "conciliationism" (advocacy of merger of the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks). It is also important, as Deutscher (pp. 93-4) points out, to separate Trotsky's often extreme and unsubstantiated attacks on Lenin, from his brilliant insights on the phenomenon of substitutionism. Nor should we reject Trotsky's early analysis just because (as Carlo and Cliff point out) Trotsky himself tilted in the direction of substitutionism in the era of defeat after 1919.

<sup>28</sup> On Gramsci, I feel that Molyneux's contribution is inferior to that of Carl Boggs (*Gramsci's Marxism*, Pluto Press, 1976; "Gramsci and Eurocommunism," *Radical America*, vol. 14, no. 3, May-June 1980).

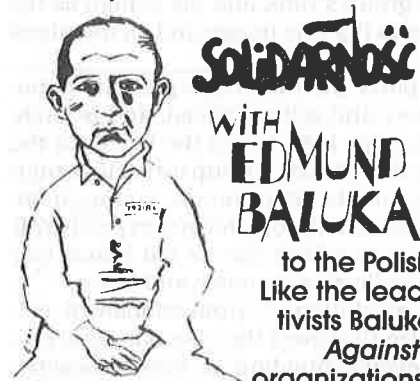
<sup>29</sup> See for example, Heidi Hartman, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," *Capital and Class*, no. 8, Summer 1979.

<sup>30</sup> We should avoid Lenin's paternalistic approach to women. See Anne Bobroff, "The Bolsheviks and Working Women, 1905-1920," *Radical America*, vol. 10, no. 3, May-June 1976.

<sup>31</sup> For a debate, see Johannah Brenner, "Women's Self-Organization," *Against the Current*, vol. 1, no. 1, Fall 1980, and the letters replying to this article in subsequent issues. See also the debate between Celia Pugh, Sheila Rowbotham, Beatrix Cambell, and Joan Smith, in *International*, vol. 5, no. 1, Autumn 1979.

<sup>32</sup> On Blacks, see Joel Jordan, "Black Liberation or Black Separation," *Against the Current*, vol. 1, no. 1, Fall, 1980.

<sup>33</sup> "The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism," *Radical America*, vol. 13, no. 5, Sept.-Oct., 1979.



Edmund Baluka was the leader of the 1971 shipyard occupation in the city of Szczecin. He was forced to flee Poland, and as a result spent some years in France and England where his socialist ideas developed.

Baluka returned to Poland in 1980 to help organize Solidarity. He also attempted to build a socialist party in Szczecin in opposition to the Polish regime. This supposed crime earned him a five-year jail sentence.

Like the leaders of the KOR (Workers Defense Committee) and other key Solidarity activists Baluka was not freed in the military regime's much publicized amnesty.

*Against the Current* urges its readers to approach trade union locals and other organizations with the following resolution:

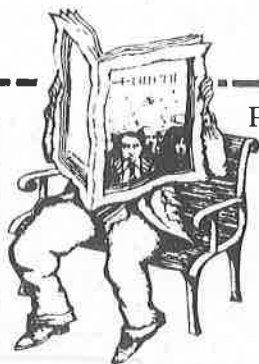
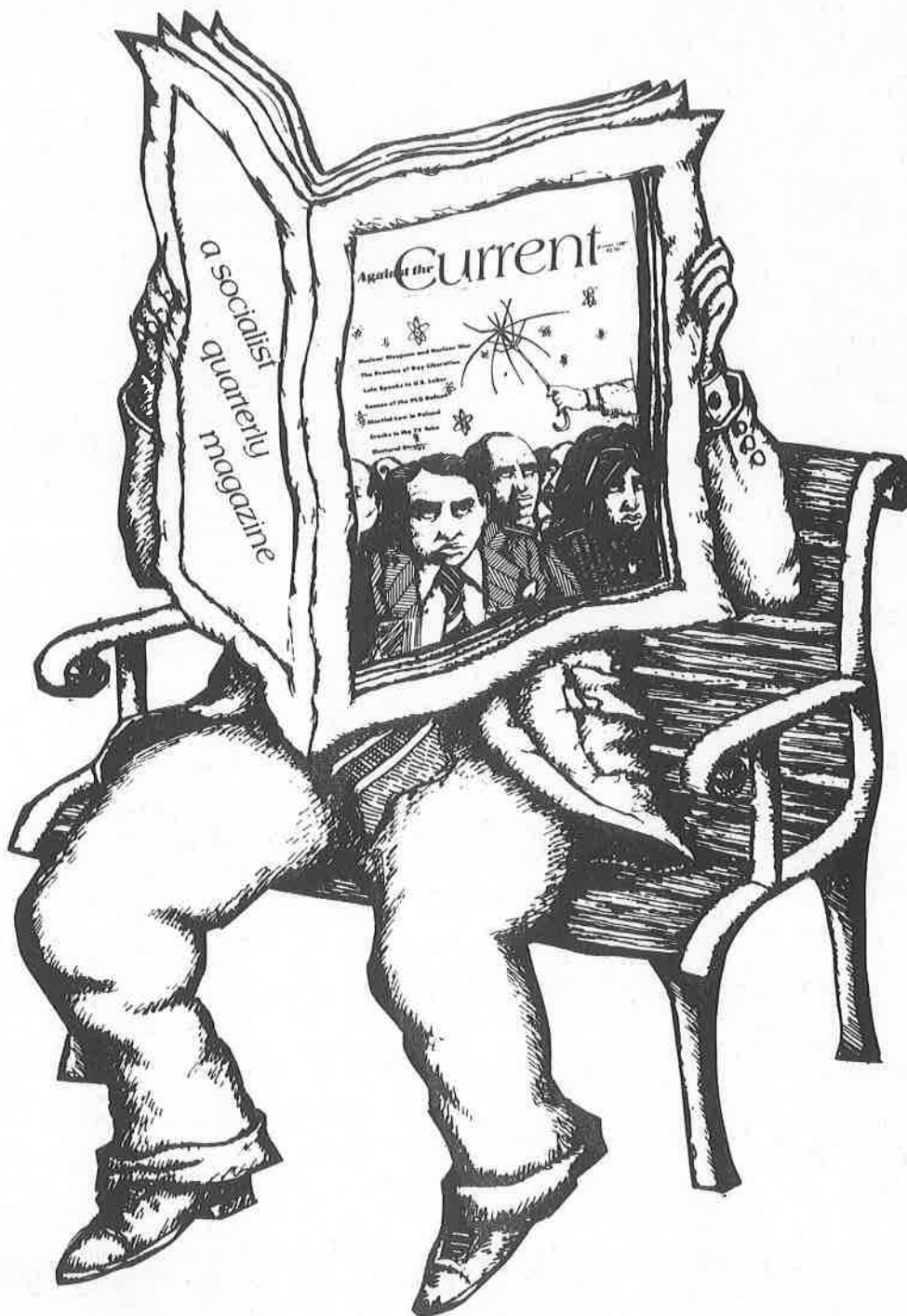
**"We demand the immediate release from jail of Edmund Baluka, the leader of the 1971 shipyard occupation in Szczecin. He has been jailed for five years for struggling for the same thing as workers elsewhere in the world—for a society without exploitation and oppression, run by the democratic organizations of the workers themselves."**

Send copies of resolution to: The Polish Embassy, Washington, D.C.

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