

In Defense of Marxism

\$3.00

Ernest Mandel (1923 - 1995)



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Who We Are

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism is published by an independent collective of U.S. socialists who are in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, a worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists.

Supporters of this magazine may be involved in different socialist groups and/or in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. These include unions and other labor organizations, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. military intervention, gay and lesbian rights campaigns, civil liberties and human rights efforts. We support similar activities in all countries and participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies. Many of our activities are advanced through collaboration with other supporters of the Fourth International in countries around the world.

What we have in common is our commitment to the Fourth International's critical-minded and revolutionary Marxism, which in the twentieth century is represented by such figures as V.I. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. We also identify with the tradition of American Trotskyism represented by James P. Cannon and others. We favor the creation of a revolutionary working-class party, which can only emerge through the conscious efforts of many who are involved in the struggles of working people and the oppressed and who are dedicated to revolutionary socialist perspectives.

Through this magazine we seek to clarify the history, theory and program of the Fourth International and the American Trotskyist tradition, discussing their application to the class struggle internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class, establishing a working people's democracy and socialist society based on human need instead of private greed, in which the free development of each person becomes possible.

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism is independent of any political organization. Not all U.S. revolutionaries who identify with the Fourth International are in a common organization. Not all of them participate in the publication of this journal. Supporters of this magazine are committed to comradely discussion and debate as well as practical political cooperation which can facilitate eventual organizational unity of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. At the same time, we want to help promote a broad recomposition of a class-conscious working class movement and, within this, a revolutionary socialist regroupment, in which perspectives of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, and American Trotskyism will play a vital role.

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism will publish materials generally consistent with these perspectives, although it will seek to offer *discussion articles* providing different points of view within the revolutionary socialist spectrum. Signed articles do not necessarily express the views of anyone other than the author.

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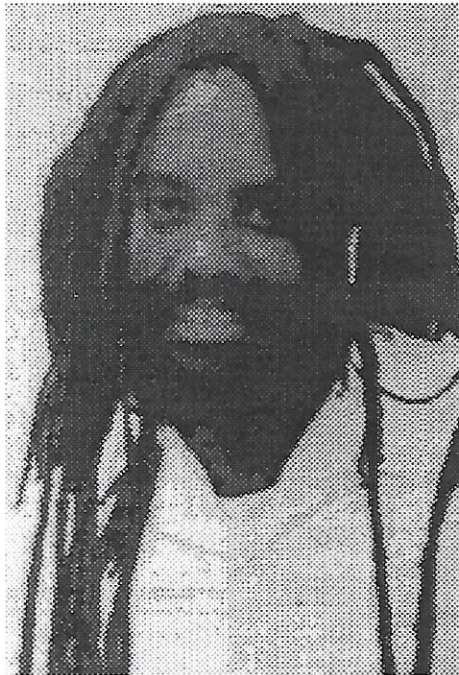
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A Stay of Execution, but the Struggle Continues!

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Statement of the Western Pennsylvania Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal



Mumia Abu-Jamal

Ten days before the scheduled August 17 execution date, Judge [Albert] Sabo granted an indefinite stay. The order reads, in part, "While this Court's order is not an expression of an opinion on the merits of the Defendant's motion for Post Conviction Relief, the law dictates that this Court grant the Defendant ample time to have these proceedings reviewed by the highest court of this Commonwealth [Pennsylvania] and the highest court of the United States."

Since when does Judge Sabo care anything about the law? Although he hotly denied that his decision had anything to do with intense pressure from both at home and abroad, we know better. It is *our* pressure on this government, the pressure of *we the people*, that pushed government officials to send the order to Judge Sabo's court. That order had nothing to do with justice. It had to do with political games, saving face, and most important, it was *a desperate attempt by this government to stop the growing movement we've built to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, free all political prisoners, and abolish the racist death penalty.*

We continue to take to the streets because Mumia Abu-Jamal is still held hostage. Mumia

The Stay

"Justice is just an emotional feeling..."
— Judge Albert F. Sabo, *PCRA Hearing, Com. v. Abu-Jamal ('95)*

In the late morning of August 7, 1995, Senior Judge Sabo surprised many in the courtroom by issuing an extended stay of execution, citing "Pending Appeals" in the case.

The decision seemed expected by the prosecutors, but stunned members of the defense team, whose client had ten days until death, and who expected nothing from the crusty, acerbic jurist. Observers believe that this was the first stay issued in the judge's career. Questions abound — among them, "What does it mean?"

To simplify, a stay is a judicial stop sign, and in this case, stopped a death warrant. It should be clear, however, that the writer remains on Death Row, under a death sentence — only the date has been changed.

The state of Pennsylvania still has every intention of killing me — just not right now.

Thus, the stay is a limited victory, not just for the Jamals and the Africas, but for thousands and tens of thousands of people from every corner of the globe — to these many, our most profound and heartfelt thanks for your militant and spirited protests. *Long Live John Africa!*

Although many radicals and progressives expressed joy at news of the stay, other political analysts saw it as a clever

move by a clever judge, who did what higher courts would have done and, in so doing, attempted to blunt the edge of a growing and militant anti-death penalty movement, in Philadelphia and beyond, thereby stymieing a series of planned demonstrations.

Whatever the reasoning, let us utilize this precious time to build a stronger and broader movement, not to "stay" one execution, but to halt them all! *Down with the Racist U.S. Death Penalty!*

In an age when South Africa, once the pariah of the international community, has abolished *all* executions as an affront to the inherent right to life, our task cannot be to merely stay (or slow down) one man's execution. No! It must be to echo the world — the European Community, Australia, South Africa, *et al.* — in total abolition of this racist vestige of the lynching tree: all forms of state murder.

It will take the power of the people — you — us all — to bring it about. We can do it. If you are truly committed, we *will* do it. I know I am doing my part — will you help me? This stay is but the first step, although in the right direction, in our long walk to freedom.

No matter where you live, there is a support group near you. Contact International Concerned Family & Friends at (215) 476-8812.

We are growing — thanx to you!
— Mumia Abu-Jamal

Abu-Jamal is still on death row. Mumia Abu-Jamal has not been granted a new and fair trial. We demand our brother be released on bail, now. We demand a real trial, a fair trial.

The evidentiary hearings this summer have made it abundantly clear that Judge Sabo is not fit to sit on any court proceedings. He doesn't know what fairness means. We're tired of mainstream media that only print soundbites from the defense, while telling the D.A.'s story over and over again. We want the

media to tell all the facts about suppressed evidence, intimidation of witnesses, the deals, and lots, lots more.

Final arguments before Judge Sabo will be heard on September 11 in Philadelphia. We have no guarantee about when he will announce his decision, so that we can appeal to a higher court. *We continue to demand a new, fair trial.* □

August 17, 1995

Historical Background to the Conflict in Former Yugoslavia

by George Saunders

The ongoing conflicts and continuing horrors of war in former Yugoslavia are among the most difficult and most important problems facing humanity today. This region in the south-eastern corner of Europe — “the Balkans” — has loomed large in the history of the 20th century. Issues of combined and uneven development, national liberation, social revolution, and the destructive barbarism of war — what Marx called “the common ruin of the contending classes,” to which we might add “and of contending nations” — have been sharply highlighted in this part of our troubled world.

The Balkan wars of 1912–1913 (with their unexampled ferocity) were like a premonition of the First World War (1914–18), whose onset was of course triggered by events in Sarajevo, now the capital of Bosnia. The imperialist

“great powers,” the relatively advanced capitalist states of northern and western Europe (France, Britain, Germany), together with the economically less advanced empires of Austria-Hungary and Russia, competed with one another for influence and control over this mountainous and relatively undeveloped piece of real estate (as they viewed it, and still view it). The area was dropping “like a piece of ripe fruit” from the hands of its former “owners,” the ruling classes of the semi-feudal Turkish Ottoman Empire, which had dominated the Balkan peninsula since virtually the time of Columbus. (Only tiny Montenegro had remained free of Ottoman rule.)

The competition among the imperialist powers over this territory, and over numerous other colonial or semi-colonial territories of the

world, which they sought to redivide among themselves, was what resulted in the two world wars, with their incredible destruction and the loss of millions of lives.

Similar competition among imperialist powers over this and other regions could conceivably lead to another world war even today, although that is certainly not an immediate prospect, since the worldwide military domination of U.S. imperialism remains pretty much unchallenged in the post-Cold War era.

The Yugoslav Revolution

In the wake of World War II, the workers and peasants of Yugoslavia set an example for the world by overthrowing capitalism and establishing a socialist republic, the first successful mass-based socialist revolution since the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917. The Yugoslav revolution gave rise to hopes for a Balkan Socialist Federation (embracing Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and possibly Greece), the revival of an idea promoted by revolutionary socialists (particularly Christian Rakovsky, a leader of both the Bulgarian and

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Editors' Note: Ernest Mandel, the Fourth International, Class Struggle in Mexico, the U.S., and China

This issue is devoted mainly to our recently deceased, beloved comrade Ernest Mandel, whose enormous contributions to Marxism in the second half of the 20th century are well known. Comrade Mandel was also the best-known spokesperson and leader of the Fourth International in recent decades, and it is fitting that a section of this memorial issue also be devoted to a discussion of the FI, a topic Mandel dealt with at length in his last major piece of writing, “World Socialist Revolution Today” (first published in our May-June 1995 issue). In this connection, we are printing a range of five differing viewpoints on the recent World Congress of the FI.

This issue highlights another important international link-up — a speech by Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, one of our International Contributing Editors (Ernest Mandel was another). Comrade Ibarra was invited to address a conference of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE). As chairperson of Mexico's Convención Nacional Democrática, Rosario Ibarra symbolizes the forces in her country that are fighting for democratic rights and workers rights, and have rallied to support and defend the Zapatistas. The BMWE, as shown by its resolution on Mexico (published here with Rosario's speech), symbolizes important new stirrings in organized labor in the U.S., not only the struggle against NAFTA and solidarity with Mexican workers but also the effort to establish a labor party in this country. The BMWE was the third national union in the U.S. to endorse Labor Party Advocates. (More on the changes under way in the union movement and on LPA in Charles Walker's article in this issue.)

As we go to press word comes of two more significant developments in the U.S. labor movement.

One, the ILWU (International Longshore and Warehousemen Union) voted on Friday, August 18, to endorse Labor Party Advocates — by the unanimous vote of the union's international executive body. The ILWU thus becomes the fourth union nationally to support the growing movement for a U.S. labor party, whose founding convention is scheduled for Cleveland, Ohio, June 6–9, 1996.

Two, a major national conference, march, and rally by health care workers (indeed it was international, involving trade unionists from Canada as well) was held in San Francisco August 19–20 to defend workers facing massive cuts by the health care corporations and to

protest the deterioration of the U.S. health care system. This effort was led by Local 250 of the Service Employees International Union and the California Nurses Association (whose top officers are LPA endorsers). Major speakers at the rally included Tony Mazzocchi of LPA, consumer advocate Ralph Nader (also a supporter of LPA), and Jesse Jackson, who continues to hint at an independent presidential race in 1996.

In our next issue we hope to have articles about these developments. Also received and scheduled for our next issue is an article by David Jones on the 10th anniversary celebration of the P-9 strike in Austin, Minnesota, together with related materials. Likewise, a major article by Vera Wigglesworth on “Socialists and African American Self-Determination.”

This past month a worldwide movement was successful, so far, in winning a stay of execution for Mumia Abu-Jamal, but the life of this eloquent spokesman for African American liberation is still in danger. Mass demonstrations, like the impressive one in Philadelphia on August 12 with speakers representing a wide array of opinion in the Black community, as well as many white supporters, point the way toward what is needed to win Mumia's freedom.

Also in this issue are articles (including by Zhang Kai, one of our International Contributing Editors) commemorating the sixth anniversary of the mass movement for democratic rights in China, suppressed in the bloody massacre of June 4, 1989, at Tiananmen Square. These indicate a new upturn in the struggle for democratic and trade union rights in that country.

Finally, we call our readers' attention to, and urge them to support and participate in, three major demonstrations coming up next month (October). First, coinciding with a scheduled speech by Fidel Castro at the United Nations, there will be a mass demonstration in New York City October 21 calling for an end to the U.S. blockade of Cuba. (More information about that, and support demonstrations in other cities, is on our back cover.) Second, in an unprecedented move the Nation of Islam, led by Louis Farrakhan, is calling for a “Million Man March” in Washington, D.C., on Monday, October 16. Third, the National People's Campaign in its ongoing fight against the Gingrich-Clinton “Contract on America” will hold activities in various parts of the country September 15–October 2. (For more information, see Michael Livingston's article in this issue.)

What Should Socialists Do in Relation to the War in Ex-Yugoslavia?

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

At the recent World Congress of the Fourth International there was considerable discussion of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. One delegate recounted the recent history of developments there, which is helpful for understanding the present situation. I would summarize his account as follows.

As far as the most immediate roots of the present situation go, the break-up of the former Yugoslavia can be traced to 1987, when the predominantly Serbian bureaucratic rulers in Belgrade whipped up Serbian nationalism to use it to suppress the Albanian majority in Kosovo province. They did this by spreading rumors that non-Serbs were physically threatening and attacking Serbs throughout the Yugoslav federation, especially in the regions dominated by non-Serbs. This Serbian chauvinist campaign was used to justify the removal of all Albanians (who constituted 90 percent of the population in Kosovo) from any positions of responsibility in Kosovo province, replacing them with Serbs and their henchmen, and suppressing the Albanian population and organizations.

Although this scare tactic by the Serbian chauvinists allowed the ex-Titoist, ex-Stalinist bureaucrats to distract the attention of workers from the disastrous economic policies of the central government and to stay in power in Belgrade, it frightened the non-Serbs and made the break-up of Yugoslavia inevitable. Breaking away from the unified state of Yugoslavia was the way the other, non-Serbian, republics — suffering like Kosovo from the same austerity measures and social unrest — chose to escape a fate similar to that of the Albanians in Kosovo. The Serbian regime's armed militias, with the support of the central government's Yugoslav army, responded with armed aggression to grab land and resources under the banner of protecting Serbian population centers and/or establishing a "Greater Serbia."

The Serbian Stalinists used Serbian chauvinism not only to stay in power but try to expand their territory, and that was what caused the war and destruction that followed, for which the Serbian Stalinists and their allies bear full responsibility.

This brutal, agonizing war in the southeast corner of Europe has been going on for over three years now, with no end in sight. There is no need to review the war's destructive consequences, which have been widely publicized. What is behind this war? Who stands to benefit? Why has imperialism stood by as if helpless

while the Serbian militias have overrun Bosnia, leaving hundreds of thousands dead and wounded; surrounding, blockading, and destroying Sarajevo and other population centers; and creating millions of refugees?

The key to understanding and explaining the roots of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia lie in examining the economic and political crisis that developed there in the late 1970s and in the 1980s. I have summarized some key elements of this in previous issues of *BIDOM* (see especially No. 103, March 1993, and No. 107, June 1993), pulling together data from several sources, but mainly from articles by Michele Lee in *International Viewpoint* and from articles and a book by Branka Magas. This analysis has for the most part stood the test of events and time.

Some supporters of the Fourth International, mistakenly in my opinion, have tended to explain the situation in the former Yugoslavia by concentrating on what they see as the abuse of the "national question" (in general) by capitalist restorationist elements in every republic and by the foreign imperialists. But I think that the way out of the crisis is to be found by looking at the deeper economic and political problems. The resolution adopted by the FI's United Secretariat in March 1995 (published in the June 1995 *International Viewpoint*) is a good example of this mistaken approach. The same issue of *IV* reports aspects of the role of the IMF austerity measures in the rise of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. However, the main thrust of the resolution is to buttress the claim that the imperialists were intent on breaking up the Yugoslav federation and that this was the source of the problem. Rather than bemoaning the break-up of Yugoslavia, we should remember that it was the economic, political, and social crisis inside this federation, resulting from the policies of its leadership, that gave rise to the present conflicts.

Of course, the imperialists are interested in visiting destruction and dislocation on any part of the world that dared to overthrow capitalism. But is reestablishing the Yugoslav federation going to stop that?

Of course, internationalists base themselves on the need to unite the proletariat internationally. But why must the various nationalities of this region be put back into a renewed version of the old Yugoslav federation in order to make progress? This is not necessarily the only solution. In fact, because of Serbian domination, it

is precisely a solution that has not worked. It is not scientific to assume that it will if tried again.

One reason for what I consider mistaken views on the Bosnian question is that some European FI comrades were too much enmeshed in a milieu dominated by Serbian intellectuals. This limited their perspectives on the matter, especially as many of these intellectuals began to believe the Serbian Stalinists' propaganda about the dangers to them posed by the non-Serbs. For a long time the FI resolutions on Bosnia would not admit that the non-Serbs could be victims of Serbian oppression, which had its roots in the Stalinist bureaucratic apparatus. In fact, the non-Serbs have every right to their independence and to militarily defend their independence. (This chauvinist weakness among Serbian intellectuals is the same problem that one can find among Russian intellectuals in regard to the struggles of the non-Russians for self-determination, with the difference that Russian chauvinism has been brutal and oppressive for many more decades than its Serbian counterpart.)

The problem became even more complicated when the Serbian authorities began to propagate on the theme that the Bosnian resistance was nothing more than the resistance of Muslim fundamentalists intent on establishing a state like that in Iran.

The justified fears among non-Serbs fueled their nationalist sentiment. Local capitalist restorationist elements have abused this fear to promote their own agendas. But this only reflects the absence of class-conscious workers organizations. Only these had the potential to see through all the complications, explain what was going on to masses of workers, and prepare resistance in the form of a struggle for a political revolution to throw out the old apparatus throughout all the republics.¹ Possibilities for building such organizations, and asserting democratic rights in general, began to open up in the late 1980s, especially when there was an upsurge of the workers movement in Yugoslavia. It was the collaboration among Serbian and Albanian workers and their families against the consequences of the central government's IMF-imposed austerity measures in the 1980s that caused the Serbian Stalinists — in the person of Milosevic — to launch their chauvinist media and political campaigns. These campaigns ulti-

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1. Of course, the absence of class-conscious workers organizations in turn reflects the extremely unfavorable circumstances for the building of such organizations in the Stalinist or Titoist military-bureaucratic police states during the Cold War era. — *Eds.*

Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989 Recalled

Resurgence of Democratic Struggles in China — Sixth Anniversary of June Fourth Massacre

by Zhang Kai

The following article is reprinted, with minor changes for reasons of style, from *October Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, dated June 30, 1995. *October Review* is a Fourth Internationalist published in Hong Kong, mostly in Chinese but with one article of each issue, as well as the table of contents, in English

"June Fourth" refers to the ferocious act of government repression committed on June 4, 1989, when the bureaucratic regime of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), led by Deng Xiaoping and Premier Li Peng, moved to drown in blood, with tanks and guns, the mass protests calling for democratization that had centered on Tiananmen Square.

The movement had been led by students but was supported by the workers and peasants, the masses of the people, on such a scale that the late Ernest Mandel, speaking to a mass support rally in New York City, rightly characterized it as "the Beijing Commune" [see *BIDOM* 1989].

With his usual generosity and breadth of vision Mandel described the spirit of solidarity alive in that mass movement of May-June 1989 as a foretaste of human relations in a genuine socialist society.

Before the sixth anniversary of June Fourth this year, the Beijing regime started rounding up activists of the democracy movement. It was reported that several dozen activists had been taken away from their homes or disappeared.

All these years the regime has resorted to repression of dissidents. In 1994, several hundred persons were reportedly detained or jailed. The most famous dissident Wei Jingsheng suddenly disappeared after his short release from prison. Wei Jingsheng's assistant Tong Ge [also spelled "Tong Yi"; on whom, see accompanying article] had also been arrested for a whole year and nothing had been heard of her.

In the past few years, the period from March to June had been a period of alert for the regime, a time for putting dissidents in prison or under house arrest [to forestall any demonstrations marking the June Fourth anniversary]. This year it was rumored that the period would extend to August or September, indicating increasing tension on the political scene in China, with the veteran Chen Yun already dead and Deng Xiaoping about to die, and with the power struggle in the top leadership growing more acute.

Petitions from Intellectuals

This year, a wave of petition letters from intellectuals to the CCP and government leadership has taken place. At the end of February, twelve scholars and dissidents, including Bao Zunxin and literary critic Wang Ruoshui, wrote two letters to the National People's Congress (NPC), one "Recommendations Against Corruption" and the other "To Abolish Arbitrary Detention and Safeguard Personal Freedoms." Former student leader Wang Dan and 25 others, including Lin Mu, wrote to the NPC with "Recommendations on the Defense of Basic Human Rights and Social Justice." Dissident Liu Li-

anchun and 21 others wrote a petition "Recommendation on the Abolition of the Practice of Reeducation through Labor." ["Reeducation through labor" is the euphemism the regime uses for its punitive forced-labor camps.] The NPC did not react to these petitions, and some of the petitioners were arrested before June Fourth this year.

The arrests, however, did not inhibit the wave of petitions. Within two weeks, at least eight other petitions were launched. The leading one was a petition by 45 well-known intellectuals, 15 of whom were from the Science Academy. The title of the petition was "Greeting the United Nations Year of Lenience, Appealing for Lenience in Domestic Politics." It appealed for a reevaluation of June Fourth and the release of those imprisoned in connection with June Fourth.

Another petition was by 52 scholars and dissidents, who appealed for "drawing the lessons of blood, promoting the process of democracy and the rule of law." It asked every citizen in China, but particularly the party and government authorities that have made wrong decisions, to rethink the tragedy of June Fourth with repentance, reason, and responsibility.

Families of June Fourth Victims Petition

It was also the first time in six years that families of victims of June Fourth (27 families, including Professor Ding Zilin of Beijing University) jointly petitioned the Standing Committee of the NPC, saying that "they absolutely cannot accept that the government resorted to machine guns and tanks to harm so many people and still could hurriedly try to dismiss this world-stunning tragedy with the words 'quenching a rebellion.'" They requested that the NPC Standing Committee form a special commission to inves-

tigate the June Fourth massacre, that the investigation be fair and impartial, that the number and the names of the deceased be disclosed, and that the inquiries of each individual family be answered. They called on people throughout the country to be concerned for the destinies of the families of the June Fourth victims.

Behind the Revival of People's Struggles

This wave of petitions is an indication of a revitalization of people's struggles in China. The background to this is an intensification of power struggles at the top. With Chum Yun dead, Jiang Zemin has been placing his men from Shanghai in important positions in Beijing. Chen Xitong, the CCP secretary in Beijing, was removed from power on charges of corruption. Yuan Mu, director of the State Council Research Office, was also removed. (Both had been hardliners favoring the June Fourth crackdown, as well as supporters of Li Peng.) On the other hand, Li Peng has just had an official biography published, an attempt to eulogize his past. Its title is *Li Peng — Son of Yen River*.

The economic situation has also deteriorated, a further source of discord in the leadership. In 1994, prices of grain, cotton, and fuel soared by 21.7 percent (official figures). The Beijing Steelworks, a key state-owned factory, was denounced for serious failings and deficits. Whether the growing regionalism in the south should be contained is another controversy. With the political and economic situation becoming more explosive, it is not surprising that there has been a resurgence of people's struggles for democracy. □

June 1, 1995

Help Save Life of Chen Ziming

Campaign for Chinese Pro-Democracy Activists

The following notice was posted on the Internet from April Fifth Action in Hong Kong on August 15, 1995.

The prominent Chinese dissident, Chen Ziming, who was on "medical parole," was rearrested and sent to jail again on June 25. His wife, Wang Zhihong, has already appealed twice to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the International Red Cross, Amnesty International, Human Rights in China, and leaders of all countries for his release.

Chen was diagnosed as having cancer, hepatitis B, heart disease, and other health problems and underwent surgery in September 1994. Even though Chen's cancer was removed in an operation, he has not recovered completely and the chance of a relapse within a year is quite high. According to Wang, all treatment stopped when Chen went back to jail.

By rearresting him once again, the Chinese government could have virtually sentenced him to death.

Besides Chen, there are also numerous cases of repression. Wei Jingsheng, who had been on parole since September 1993, was arrested again on April 1, 1994. Wang Dan, released from prison in 1993, was rearrested on May 21, 1995, together with Liu Nianchun, who has been active in organizing various petitions to the Chinese government.

We appeal to you all to demand the release of these activists, who have done nothing but exercise the freedom of speech and the right to associate.

We demand that the Chinese government:

1. release Chen Ziming, Wei Jingsheng, Wang

Dan, Liu Nianchun, and all imprisoned pro-democracy activists;

2. stop all repression against pro-democracy activists;
3. respect freedom of expression, publication, association, and demonstration.

If you agree with these demands, please copy them to your reply, put your signature at the end, and send it to:

E-mail: tllau5@hkein.ie.cuhk.hk

Fax: (852) 2394 4383

Mail address: 103, Argyle Street, Front Portion, 2nd Floor, Mongkok, Hong Kong

Collected signatures would be sent to the Chinese government on August 20, 1995. □

Defend Tong Yi — Urgent Action Needed

The following information was posted from Hong Kong on the Internet, July 15, 1995, by April Fifth Action. For information on contacting April Fifth Action, see the accompanying article "Campaign for Chinese Pro-Democracy Activists."

Human Rights in China (HRIC) — an organization described below — has learned that on the morning of July 13, 1995, two police officers visited the parents of political prisoner Tong Yi to inform them that: (1) due to the fact that Tong Yi has been uncooperative in completing her labor production quotas since her arrival at the Hewan Reeducation Through Labor Camp [sic] in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in January 1995, she would be transferred to the Shayang Reeducation Through Labor Farm in Hubei province (the largest such camp in the country), where prison authorities would use "forceful measures" to make her obey; and (2) her mother would no longer be allowed to visit her because Tong Yi allegedly becomes "too despondent and unruly" following her mother's monthly visits. HRIC also has reliable information that Tong Yi has already been beaten by police guards with police batons in the labor camp.

HRIC is extremely concerned that the "forceful measures" referred to will involve physical punishment administered by the labor camp authorities or other prisoners ordered to do so. HRIC considers Tong Yi a prisoner of conscience who is in immediate physical danger and calls on the international community, including the UN Committee Against Torture and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, to demand the imme-

diately and unconditional release of Tong Yi. (See below for addresses individuals can write to, to call for her release.)

Who Is Tong Yi?

Tong Yi, 27, was the former assistant and translator for China's most famous dissident, Wei Jingsheng, until her detention in April 1994 after informing foreign reporters about Wei's April 1, 1994, detention. On December 22, 1994, Tong was sentenced without trial to a two-and-a-half year Reeducation Through Labor term. She was sentenced under Article 10 (4) of the 1982 "Trial Implementation Methods for Reeducation Through Labor," which allows for the detention of individuals for up to three years without charge or trial for activities deemed to "disturb public order." Although the detention order did not specify what crime she was accused of, Tong Yi's only "crime" appears to be her association with Wei Jingsheng.

Since her sentencing, Tong has been working 12-hour days in a textile workshop at the Hewan Reeducation Camp near her home in Wuhan, Hubei Province. In a letter smuggled out to her mother, Tong Yi described being beaten on January 16, 1995, by two camp inmates working as "trustees" assigned to assist the prison guards in keeping order. The beating occurred after Tong refused to work more than the eight hours per day stipulated by state regulations and complained about

expectations that prisoners in the camp work until 10 p.m. or later to fulfill their production quotas.

Tong asked camp officials for protection but instead was beaten the following day by more than ten fellow women prisoners. Her face and body were reportedly swollen and covered with bruises. In her letter, Tong Yi stated that she would work only eight hours, "even if they beat me to death." The letter also claimed that her written appeals against the inhuman conditions in the camp were repeatedly stolen or confiscated.

Tong Yi studied political science at the University of Political Science and Law in Beijing. She was active in the 1989 democracy movement on Tiananmen Square as part of the Student Dialogue Delegation and as a result was forced to leave the university before graduating. She then worked with the dissident intellectual Cao Siyuan and translated into Chinese the book *China's Crisis* by Columbia University professor Andrew Nathan. The book, examines the impact of the June 4 Beijing massacre on the question of the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party.

Tong became an assistant for Wei Jingsheng upon his release from a 14½ year imprisonment in September 1993. For the following seven months she acted as a liaison between Wei and foreign diplomats and

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Jobs and Justice — in Mexico and the U.S.

by Rosario Ibarra de Piedra

Rosario Ibarra de Piedra ran for president of Mexico in 1988 as the candidate of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT — Revolutionary Workers Party, Mexican section of the Fourth International). She is currently the chairperson of the National Democratic Union, a coalition of supporters of the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas. The following is the text of her remarks to the Seventeenth Regular Convention of the Pennsylvania Federation, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, which was held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August 2-4, 1995.

First, I'd like to thank you for inviting me. When I was called on the telephone and invited to come, I didn't know who you were, but it was enough for me to know that you worked for the railroad for me to come here, because of the significance of the struggle of the railroad workers in my country and in many other countries. The leaders of the railroad workers union in Mexico have spent more than 18 years in prison in Mexico because of the actions of the Mexican government. One is Valentino Campa, and the other is Demetrio Vayallo.

I'm very happy to be here because when I first arrived, I realized that among yourselves you address each other the same way the Zapatistas do, Brothers and Sisters. This is one of the characteristics of the Zapatista movement in Mexico. They refer to each other as Brothers and Sisters. The other thing that I was very impressed by favorably are the words on your banner, "Jobs and Justice" because these are words that the Mexican workers have used over many years in their struggle in Mexico. "Jobs and Justice."

You must be asking yourselves, who is this relatively old woman here in front of you. The story of my struggle that I have carried out is very sad. In 1975 the Mexican government kidnapped one of my sons, and I've never seen him since. I was at that time a housewife, like thousands of other women in Mexico. I had a life that wasn't such a terribly poor life as many other women in Mexico. My husband was a doctor, and we lived relatively well.

My son was a medical student, and he learned before many of the adults in my country, together with many other youth. He learned what the desperate poverty in my country meant and the injustice brought about by the government. Because of this, together with many other youth, he set out on a struggle against the government, and the government responded with the hard hand of oppression.

In 1975, after he was kidnapped, my determined struggle began at that time. I found along the way many other women comrades who had suffered the same thing that I had. One of these other women is here with me in the hall, and she travels with me to many places. It is important for me to tell you this because I think that probably none of you imagine that in Mexico there were disappearances. You may know that in Argentina, in Chile, in Nicaragua, and other countries in Latin America there are disappeared, but you have probably never thought that this could happen in Mexico. The image that the Mexican government sells of Mexico is the happy image of Acapulco and Guadalajara

and the mariachis and the beach resorts; everything happy and jolly is the image that foreigners have of Mexico.

The former president of Mexico, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, said that Mexico was going to join the First World, and this was as false as the promises that were made to the Mothers of the Disappeared. Carlos Salinas de Gortari received a delegation of Mothers of the Disappeared, and he kissed our cheeks and promised us that in one month we would have news about our children. This was false. This was a lie. We were never given an answer. He was very busy arranging the Free Trade Agreement. When he thought that he was at the peak of the top of the world, at the peak of glory, at that moment, on January 1, 1994, the rebellion erupted in the Lacandón Jungle in Mexico, in Chiapas.

Salinas de Gortari's dreams fell. The succeeding government of Zedillo followed in the footsteps of Salinas de Gortari and tried to end the struggle, but the Indians of Chiapas of the Lacandón Jungle showed to Mexico and to the world what they were capable of, of fighting for their rights.

I said a few moments ago that these two words, "Jobs and Justice," were very close to me and meant something to me. They are two of the 13 demands of the Zapatista movement: democracy, freedom, justice, peace, housing, work, education, culture, information, and security. These are things that every human being wants and which not a single person, not a single Indian, in that part of Mexico has. The Mexican government wants to solve the problem through charity, a charity which seeks the submission of the Indian people in Chiapas. I realize that because of the documents that you have, the papers that you have, that you know a lot about the Zapatistas, but when you see the conditions there close up, it really makes your heart bleed, to see what happens there.

Subcomandante Marcos has characterized the poor people in Mexico and of the whole world as the people in the basement. They are not even on ground level. They are below that. They are below the most basic levels of existence. I want to tell you that Subcomandante Marcos is the commander of the Zapatistas because of the decision of his comrades and because of the decision of the Indians in Chiapas. And we know of him through his writings and his thinking; we know that his beliefs are noble and full of humanity. We have never seen his face, because he has to disguise himself so that the government doesn't hunt him out and assassinate him. The journalists in Mexico always ask me if I know him, and I say that I have never

seen his face, but I understand what he is saying, and it appears to me extremely noble.

A little while ago the Zapatistas issued a call to the world for a consultation. They asked certain questions that may appear to be very simplistic and naive. One question is whether they should become a political force, a political party, and should they join other movements to launch a huge movement for national liberation, and whether these 13 demands which I've listed earlier should be the demands of all of the people of Mexico.

The government of Mexico has said that such an appeal to international opinion would be undue interference in the national affairs of Mexico. This is false because the Zapatistas and the other Mexicans who are with them are not asking the opinion of other governments or of other armies. We are asking the opinion of free men and women of the world, of people who suffer the same conditions and the same lack of things as the Zapatistas. On the other hand, the Mexican government has permitted interference by the United States government in the affairs of Mexico with the loans, the multi-billion dollar loans, that were made by the Chase Manhattan Bank and other banks in this country to Mexico. The loans were made to the government of Mexico because the people didn't receive a single cent of that loan.

To obtain the loans the Mexican government has permitted that a judge in the district of New York — that a judge in New York! — has authority over the petroleum in Mexico. This is interference in the internal affairs of my country. The people who lent the money to the Mexican government and the Mexican government want to end the struggle of people in Chiapas because they want Mexican oil. The banks and the Mexican government want to take over Mexican oil, which is the richness of the country, but the Zapatistas who fled into the jungle because of the pressure by the Mexican Army are in the mountains of the Lacandón Jungle. We call these mountains the Blue Mountains. The area is the zone which has the richest unexplored petroleum deposits. The bankers know this, and that is why they want to end the struggle of the Chiapas Indians. Increasingly the consciousness of people in Mexico and around the world is waking up in support of the Mexican Indians.

In a few months and not even years the Mexican Zapatistas are known throughout the world. Two days ago I was in Spain, and other people were in France and Latin America, and in other parts of the world, and everywhere that we have gone, the response in support of the

Zapatistas has been very strong. The Mexican government takes very good care of its external image. The Mexican government is trying to find the way to end — to finish off the Chiapas Indians without calling attention to it. The Mexican government is like the picture of Dorian Gray that has a beautiful face turned outward and a horrible face inwards, and they have a great ability to trick people throughout the world. They have maintained themselves in power for many years through these tricks, but they cannot continue forever acting this way. Little by little the people of Mexico and the people throughout the world have understood, and today they have realized the painful reality of the Indians and the poor in Mexico.

In every corner of the world where there are poor people, they understand what the Zapatistas are saying, and they have unfurled a huge banner, an enormous banner, which is the banner of dignity. The negotiators for the government asked in one of the negotiations what the Zapatistas meant by dignity. The Zapatistas smiled in the way that Indians smile and said that they would give them some homework. The response was that they would give the negotiators some homework, that they needed to learn what dignity was because they had never learned what dignity was.

Those of us in Mexico who know what government repression means are extremely worried. We know that once the government makes up its mind what to do, they don't care what could happen. They don't care about killing, torturing, kidnapping, and ending political careers, the political life, so to speak, of many people that are in the sphere of the struggle.

There is a very sad balance that remains in all of the families in Mexico of people who have struggled. The railroad workers in 1958, the teachers a little bit later, the doctors later, and what happened to the students on October 2, 1968, which maybe you know about, and the other students in 1971 that were assassinated, and the wave of disappearances and kidnappings in the 1970s and the torture that members of our families were subjected to, like what happened to my husband. They broke his back. There are many, many more that we can enumerate, including the 300 from the opposition party, the Party of the Democratic Revolution [PRD — led by former presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas]. The 500 Triqui Indians who were murdered in the jungles of Oaxaca and just recently the 19 that were murdered in Guerrero by the governor of that state. It seems to me that Mexico has a culture that is favorable to death, and the Mexican government wants to finish off the Indians in my country. They are the dispensable poor.

They are much more concerned about a single point on the stock market than they are about the life of an Indian child, and Mexicans of good conscience are not prepared to accept this. I believe that all people of good conscience throughout the world are together with us in our struggle to defend our rights and lives. I take this opportunity to ask for your support for all poor Indians in Mexico and all poor Mestizos. I am not talking about financial support. I am

talking about support of solidarity and the support of good conscience, and the support of strong workers and class support, so that the Mexican government realizes that you are not fooled by them, that you don't want them to die for the interests of the greedy and powerful.

I understand from hearing you talk that you are struggling against those very interests. Who is better than you to let the world know that you are supporting the struggle for justice of the people of Mexico? Join your voices to those of other workers throughout the world and help make real the dreams of the poor people of the world.

I want to end with a few words from José Martí, the great writer of Cuba. He had spoken with premonition in his words, with foresight, when he said America will rise with its Indians or it will not rise at all. In the Lacandón Jungle the Indians have risen up, and they will wake up the Indians in the rest of the country and the Mestizos and the poor people everywhere. They will leave there as the ancient Mayan legends say, like men and women who are bats; they will reach the light to wake up the sleeping and to revive the dead. □

Solidarity with the People of Mexico Support for the Zapatista Struggle

The following resolution was adopted by the 17th Regular Convention of the Pennsylvania Federation, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees.

WHEREAS, the political wholesaling of the Canadian and American working classes and the super-exploitation of the Mexican working class endorsed by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has forevermore tied the economic futures of all North American workers to the same fate; and

WHEREAS, the political endorsement represented by NAFTA, with bipartisan support from the Democratic and Republican parties and their political allies in Mexico and Canada, of global capital and its desire to raise the level of exploitation of all North American workers requires that fraternal relations be established by all trade union organizations and their allies in all North American countries for mutual aid and support; and

WHEREAS, the conditions in Mexico for the Mexican people are particularly harsh, as by law wages can only rise at 50% of the current rate of inflation, which is currently 100%, the plunder of Mexican natural resources by the global corporations, many of which are centered in the United States, where extreme poverty, exploitation, and unemployment are commonplace among the great masses of Mexican people, while a small percentage of the Mexican ruling class who serve their international masters live in luxury, where public education is a joke, where trade union advocates and their political allies are routinely denied simple political freedoms and often encounter terrorism and repression sponsored or permitted by the Mexican government, and where elections are corrupt and routinely stolen by forces who support the status quo and candidates advocating political and economic reform of the status quo, in Mexico routinely are targets of terrorism, jail, and murder sponsored or permitted by the government; and

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1994, the date that the NAFTA agreement was signed the Mexican people in the State of Chiapas in Mexico rose up in armed conflict against the government of Mexico and the corporations of North America under the revolutionary banner of the Zapatistas, demanding broad-based economic and

political reform for the Mexican people and have paid for this demand with hundreds of deaths of their fallen comrades but have also forced the government of Mexico to enter into negotiations with the Mexican people in the State of Chiapas; and

WHEREAS, a January 13, 1995, memo from Chase Manhattan Bank in New York shamefully directed the Mexican government to put the Zapatista revolution down with force, and when the government of Mexico sent in the army, as directed by the New York bank, the solidarity of the people of Mexico with the Zapatista revolutionaries forced the government to back down, negotiate a ceasefire, and renew negotiations, serving as an inspiration for all working people in North America; and

WHEREAS, Rosario Ibarra, Chairwoman of the National Democratic Union of Mexico, an organization that supports the Zapatista struggle in particular and the struggle of the Mexican people in general, has honored us at the 17th Regular Convention of the Pennsylvania Federation BMW by bringing us news of the struggle of the Mexican people and fraternal greetings and solidarity from the Zapatistas and the Mexican people; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the 17th Regular Convention of the Pennsylvania Federation BMW thank Sister Ibarra for addressing our Convention and applaud the heroic struggle of the Zapatistas and the Mexican people, recognizing that their struggle is now and forevermore our struggle and directs the General Chairman to spread news of this struggle throughout the membership and the Grand Lodge and our fraternal allies, make an offer to establish fraternal relations with the Zapatistas and the National Democratic Union of Mexico, and encourages our Officers, lodge leaders, and membership to actively support the struggle of the Zapatistas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a \$500.00 donation be made from the Pennsylvania Federation general fund to the National Democratic Union of Mexico to support the struggle of the Mexican people.

No Magic Bullets: Organized Labor Makes Plans

by Charles Walker

It's been 48 years since the Taft-Hartley Act passed — eight years longer than the Israelites wandered in the desert. The difference is the Israelites knew where they wanted to go. More than anything, labor needs to figure out its agenda.

— Vice President Cecil Roberts,
United Mine Workers

After two long decades of declining political and economic power, leaders of large sections of organized labor's bureaucratic officialdom have announced three significant, though separate, initiatives. One, the eventual merging (over a period of five years) of three major industrial unions: the United Automobile Workers (UAW), the United Steel Workers of America (USWA), and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). Two, a campaign to remove President Lane Kirkland and Secretary-Treasurer Tom Donahue from atop the AFL-CIO. Three, the 1996 convention of Labor Party Advocates.

Taken together, these three enterprises constitute the weightiest set of actions by organized labor since the founding of the AFL-CIO in 1955. That judgment unfortunately is no exaggeration, given organized labor's dismal lack of accomplishments during the past forty years. The notable exception was reformer Ron Carey's stunning 1991 electoral defeat of the Teamsters highest echelon.

Merger of UAW, USWA, and IAM

Labor militants should find the proposed merger of the three industrial unions to be the least promising of these parallel developments. Rather than a preparation for a breakout from the status quo, the merging of these unions seems more likely to be a "circling of the wagons," a combining of resources that would serve as an enriched bank account for the surviving officeholders, thereby providing the prospect, for them, of a tolerable lifestyle. At least that's suggested by the history of union mergers during the economic slump and anti-union offensive of the 1920s, when amalgamations did not become stepping stones toward regaining lost ground.

More recently, although the unification of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations into the AFL-CIO in 1955 was touted as creating "the world's largest union," in fact it resembled more of a doormat for the bosses than a strategic stronghold for workers. In *Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO*, labor analyst Art Preis observed:

The final stage of the AFL-CIO merger occurred with no great clamor from the ranks for organic unity, although a majority of unionists were pleased by the prospect of "one big organization" and hoped it would bring them added

protection and benefits. The unity developments were set in motion by the labor leaders themselves. Their aim was better defense of their union power and prerogatives, and a unified front against both their Republican political opponents and the union ranks.

Not surprisingly, Kirkland and Donahue have congratulated the leaders of the merging unions (UAW, USWA, IAM) on their act of "solidarity" and at the same time sent a message of collaboration and business as usual to corporate America by adding: "To those members of the corporate community who might prefer a union-free environment, it [the merger] offers a choice of strong cooperation or strong opposition."

Today, as in 1955, there's "no great clamor from the ranks" pushing the officials toward merger. Still, the merger seems certain to raise the ranks' expectations, and that could further the growth of reform efforts, such as the New Directions caucus in the UAW. But by itself the merger should not be expected to jump-start widespread worker activism within the resulting union. Especially not from workers who are nearly two generations removed from the labor upsurge that gave birth to American industrial unions.

The Move to Oust Kirkland and Donahue

Last February, a minority of 10 international union presidents challenged President Lane Kirkland's control of the AFL-CIO. In a few months, the dissident presidents appeared to have gained a slight majority of the 13.3 million votes to be cast in October's AFL-CIO biennial election. In June, the insurgents named President John Sweeney of the 1.1 million Service Employees International Union (SEIU) as their candidate for AFL-CIO president. President Richard Trumka of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) were named to fill out the slate.

In late June, the unions supporting Sweeney's slate issued a 3,000-word platform entitled *Rebuilding the American Labor Movement: A New Voice for American Workers*. (Copies of this document, in the form of a glossy, attractively illustrated 20-page pamphlet, may be obtained by calling 202-898-3200, or writing to New Voice for American Workers, 1313 L Street, NW, Washington DC 20005. The pamphlet ends with the statement, "We want to hear from you...call us with your ideas at 1-800-777-7671." There is also a fax number: 202-898-3335.)

The platform's strengths are in many of the specific changes the Sweeney slate nominally

commits itself to carry out. (See the excerpts and summaries below.)

Its major weakness is its unstated continuing dependence on the Democratic Party. (It does not even mention the two-party system, let alone reveal the way that system functions as a trap for labor — since both of the parties, Republican and Democratic, are controlled by corporate money. Nor does it address the reality of growing discontent and disillusionment among working people in relation to this rigged two-party system.)

Nevertheless, the August 1995 issue of the newsletter *Labor Party Advocate* quotes favorably the following passage from *A New Voice for American Workers* — and introduces this passage with the heading, "So Join Us and Help Labor Build Its Own Strong Political Party":

We cannot borrow other people's power. We cannot rely upon the power of any political party, or community organizations or other organized constituencies. While we must reach out and embrace other progressive forces for change, we must above all build our own power by creating a strong grassroots political voice for working people in this country that speaks to their concerns and promotes a clear agenda for workers' rights.

Other weaknesses in the platform are its failure to point to the practice of business unionism, another name for class collaboration, as the Achilles heel of all of organized labor's institutions and endeavors; its critical lack of a union program for jobs; and its silence on minority and women's needs outside of the union movement.

Some Excerpts

The platform begins by stating: "The crisis facing American workers and their families requires an unprecedented response from America's unions." Then follows a thumbnail sketch of the effects of international competition, deregulation, and reductions in public budgets, which leads to this observation:

American workers make less today than they did twenty years ago. Despite record corporate profits and increased productivity, American workers have not shared in our nation's prosperity. American workers — for the first time in generations — see a world where their children will be worse off than they are.

The platform then notes that today's unions speak for only one worker in six, and consequently:

A right wing avalanche has filled the void left by a weakened labor movement. American workers look about and see no one who speaks on their behalf.

Many unions have fought valiantly against these onslaughts. Many have broken important new ground in these struggles. When we have fought with effective strategies, creative leadership and a dedicated rank and file leadership, we have often won. The AFL-CIO must lead these efforts...**We can and must create a New Voice for American Workers.** [Emphasis in original.]

Seven Goals

Next is a listing of seven goals that would define the reorganized federation. It's in the details of reaching these goals that the most promising signs are to be found.

1. Organize at a Pace and Scale That Is Unprecedented.

The platform states:

The most critical challenge facing unions today is organizing...we cannot wait for a change in the political climate to provide us with the opportunities to grow. We must first organize *despite* the law if we are ever to organize with the law. [Emphasis added.]

The platform proposes that at least \$20 million be put into organizing over a short period of time. Additional funds would be sought for direct federation organizing and for national union organizing. "Create a **Sunbelt Organizing Fund** to underwrite union efforts in the South and the Sunbelt." [Emphasis in original.] By 1997, train and deploy 1,000 new organizers "with a special emphasis on women and minorities."

Declare next summer Union Summer and recruit 1,000 college students to volunteer for a massive national organizing blitz...Provide support to local coalition-building efforts with community, religious, civil rights and other organizations. Develop a network of local organizing centers to support union organizing drives.

2. Build a Progressive Political Movement of Working People

The platform proposes:

Create a National Labor Political Training Center to develop political campaign organizers and campaign managers, recruit and train candidates, and develop community organizing support for labor's political agenda...The Center will be labor's seed bed for developing young political activists...

The Federation would encourage Central Labor Councils to focus on multi-union political organizing in working-class neighborhoods, and the building of community coalitions. The Political Training Center would provide technical assistance. National union presidents would be assigned "to act as Executive Council Liaisons" with state and local labor councils "to ensure that the views of these councils were considered by the [AFL-CIO Executive] Council and that Federation programs were carried out by the [local] councils."

Create a **Campaign '96 Fund** to augment the Federation's COPE efforts in next year's critical elections through either a special per capita tax assessment for twelve months and/or a transfer of additional resources from the Reserve Fund.

3. Construct a Labor Movement That Can Change Workers' Lives

The platform further proposes:

Create a Center for Strategic Campaigns to coordinate all national contract campaign efforts by affiliates...[and] a national network of other resources outside the labor movement...Create a Strike Support Team of top people from various unions...Create a Pension Investment Clearinghouse to provide the infrastructure to respond to the globalization of industry and capital. It would manage a database of union pension fund investments to support affiliates in specific corporate governance campaigns, monitor investment managers, and provide information on economically targeted investments...It would provide the tools to coordinate with labor centers in other countries whose pension assets are being invested in the United States, or whose employers own American firms.

4. Create a Strong Progressive Voice in American Life

On this point the platform advocates:

Create a public affairs operation that is second to none...[The] Labor Institute for Public Affairs [LIPA]...should be transformed from an institutional support organization to a pro-active strategic operation that aims...at creating a pro-worker and pro-union public environment...The AFL-CIO should provide training and technical support to help unionists at all levels effectively advocate for workers and their families.

5. Renew and Refocus Commitment to Labor Around the World

Here the platform states:

We also have much to learn from unions abroad and should listen to them as much as we share our skills and resources with them. But in today's global economy we need to see our international efforts much more in terms of the self-interest of American workers.

Create a Transnational Corporate Monitoring Project which would...[be] an active participant in support of every effort to achieve international solidarity on behalf of American workers. It would monitor the work of institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and assess the impact of NAFTA and GATT on American workers.

6. Lead a Democratic Movement That Speaks for All American Workers

Key points here are:

In order to accomplish our goals we need to create a labor movement that speaks for and looks like today's workforce. We need to open up new opportunities for women, minorities and young people at all levels of the movement [including the Executive Council]...**Enact an age 70 limit for election to general officer positions** [emphasis in original]...We should open Council meetings to the heads of groups such as APRI [A. Phillip Randolph Institute], CBTU [Coalition of Black Trade Unionists], CLUW [Coalition of Labor Union Women], LCLAA [Labor Council for Latin American Advancement] and APALA [Asian and Pacific American Labor Association], to help ensure that the views of women and workers of color are heard at the highest levels of the move-

ment...All national union presidents not on the [Executive] Council should be invited to attend council meetings...**Hold an annual conference for all central labor council leaders...**

7. Institutionalize the Process of Change

Here the platform states that

the major long term proposal for the AFL-CIO is to establish a **Committee 2000** to conduct a multi-year Strategic Planning Process, to solicit ideas for change and to consider priorities. The Committee would be comprised of members of the Executive Council, heads of other national unions, representatives of state federations and state councils, and other leaders. The Report of the Committee 2000 would be submitted to the 1997 AFL-CIO Convention.

Some Critical Comments

During the months before the election of the federation leadership, the Sweeney slate states that it will conduct "a nationwide effort to talk to workers and leaders to hear their ideas on how to build — together — a revitalized labor movement." Perhaps in this discussion they will be urged to address keystone issues such as labor's lack of a jobs program and the continuing need for border-to-border affirmative action. These are issues that field organizers must cope with every day.

Kirkland's challengers have criticized the federation's attention to foreign affairs at the expense of domestic union priorities. It's not clear if those criticisms were a veiled attack on the federation's well-documented association with the Central Intelligence Agency — some observers refer to the federation as a CIA "asset." However, the challengers' program is silent on the matter.

A Dress Rehearsal of the October Election

A dress rehearsal of October's showdown in New York will take place at the August 28-30 convention of the federation's Building and Construction Trades Department. Painters President A.L. Monroe and Larry McDonald, director of the Teamsters Construction Trade Division, have announced their joint campaigns for the top elective posts, long held by Kirkland loyalists. Other unions supporting the challengers include the Carpenters, Operating Engineers, Laborers, Sheet Metal Workers, and Plasterers and Cement Masons.

Labor Party Advocates

Three national unions not represented on the AFL-CIO Executive Council, including the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union (OCAW), several labor councils, and numerous local unions are endorsers of Labor Party Advocates, started in 1991 by Tony Mazzocchi, an OCAW leader. LPA has attracted the attention and support of many left-wing and labor activists. LPA has made extensive use of surveys of local unions and has found widespread dissatisfaction with the two parties and sentiment favorable to independent labor political action.

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Contract with America: Another Battle in a Class War

by Michael Livingston

The so-called Contract with America is really a contract on the American people. While part public relations gimmick, the Contract represents essentially another attack on the majority of people in this country, an attack carried out by the ruling class through their two political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans.

Before developing this thesis, I must deal with part of the flimflam propagated by the established political order and the corporate media: the Republicans and Democrats do not have a popular mandate to do what they are doing. The results of the November 1994 elections, the primary evidence for this claim, do not stand up to examination. The Republican majority was created by 52 percent of the people voting. But only 39 percent of the registered voters voted! Simple math shows us that the Republican "majority" was created by a bit over 20 percent of registered voters.

Of course, people who voted for Republicans or their conservative Democratic clones did not do so necessarily because they support the political thrust of the Contract. An October 1994 poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* found that 61 percent of their representative sample said spending on domestic programs should increase. Over 50 percent of the sample had never heard of the Contract (this less than a month before the election) and when told the Contract involved tax cuts, increased defense spending, and a balanced budget, the majority of respondents called the Contract "unrealistic."

While the details, in the form of the specific programs that will be cut, when, and by how much, are still being fought over and negotiated in Congress and the White House, there appears to be broad bipartisan support for the general thrust of the Contract, namely an attack on the majority of Americans, to benefit the ruling class. The Republicans and Democrats justify this attack by pointing to the need to balance the budget, reform welfare, save the social security system, and so forth. All of these apparent justifications are ideological constructs that obscure more than they explain.

The current legislative agenda embodies a ruling class political program that has four points: (1) shifting the tax burden from corporations and the wealthy to working people; (2) increasing the money for the military; (3) curtailing democracy and increasing government repression; (4) cutting the services government provides to the vast majority of Americans.

Taxing the Poor

The first element in this bipartisan ruling-class program is to shift the tax burden away from the wealthy and the corporations. The Republicans

hope to accomplish this by cutting the capital gains tax (a tax on profits) and through repeal of the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT). The AMT, created in 1986, makes corporations who might otherwise pay no taxes (because of deductions) pay a minimum amount. This tax is strongly opposed by many corporations, and its repeal would cost the U.S. substantial revenue.

The politicians hope to make these tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations acceptable to the majority by sweetening them with tax cuts to others. So the Contract promises a \$500 tax credit. The effect of a small cut to most Americans and large cuts to the wealthy and corporations will be to continue to shift the tax burden away from the rich and their corporations. A similar shift took place under the 1986 tax reform, where those earning \$40,000 or under realized a savings of 11 percent (or less). Those who earned \$1 million or more realized a savings of 31 percent. Bigger cuts for the rich mean that their share of the tax burden decreases.

The current shift in the tax burden is part of a long-term trend that has placed more and more of the tax burden on working people and less and less on the wealthy and corporations. For example, corporate taxes now account for 11 percent of federal tax revenue, compared to 39.8 percent of revenue in 1943 and 33 percent of revenue in 1953. If corporate taxes had increased to the same extent that most individual taxes had, the federal deficit would have been wiped out with money to spare.

Military Spending

The second element of the ruling class political program embodied in the Contract is an increase in military spending. Clinton wanted a \$25 billion increase over six years, while the Republicans wanted to double that amount. At a time when many programs that benefit the majority of Americans are being gutted, this represents a military outlay of \$272.7 billion per year. The Congress and the White House appear to have compromised on a \$267 billion per year military budget. In constant dollars, this is about \$17 billion more than the average annual Cold War military expenditure of \$250 billion.

Critics of the military budget note that many of the programs are unnecessary. The Congressional Budget Office's 1994 report on reducing the deficit, for example, identified \$136 billion in cuts over five years that could be made without undermining national security. Critics also contend that the two-war scenario, developed in the Pentagon's 1993 "bottom up review," is unrealistic in the extreme. This scenario calls for preparation to fight two Persian Gulf-sized regional wars at the same time.

These critics miss what, from the capitalist point of view, is significant about the military budget. High levels of military spending represent an enormous source of profits to U.S. corporations, while at the same time giving the U.S. ruling class an instrument of intervention to protect their interests around the world. Combined with the shift in the tax burden, the military budget represents a policy of taxing the poor to feed the rich, while giving the rich a tool to beat down the poor of other countries.

Curtailing Democracy and Increasing Police Powers

The third element of the ruling class political program is to curtail democracy and increase political repression. The effort to curtail democracy involves an effort to shift power from the legislative branch to the executive branch of government. The Contract had three specific proposals intended to shift power to the executive: the line-item veto, the term limits proposal, and cuts in Congressional staff. A line-item veto is unconstitutional. Line-item veto proposals are really rescission proposals or proposals for separate enrollments. In a rescission proposal the president, after signing a bill, would rescind certain spending provisions. Congress would then have to vote to overturn the rescissions. Their vote, in turn, could then be vetoed by the president. In separate enrollment proposals, an appropriations bill would be taken and divided up into hundreds or thousands of smaller bills. These smaller bills could then be vetoed by the president. Both types of proposals effectively remove Congress's power to decide how much gets spent on what programs and places that power in the hands of the executive branch.

This curtailment of democracy is accompanied by increased political repression, under the guise of fighting crime. Both the Republican Congress and the Democratic White House supported provisions in the Contract to increase the use of the death penalty, increase funding for police and prisons, stop lawsuits by prisoners, and limit the exclusionary rule, which forbids illegally obtained evidence from being used against defendants in court. These changes are part of a 15-year trend that has significantly eroded legal rights (often in the name of the "war on drugs") and led to a mushrooming of the prison population.

The fourth element of the ruling class political program is the cutting of government programs that benefit the majority of Americans. These cuts target poor women and children, education, environmental protection, veterans, housing, and other programs. For example, 200,000 children are expected to be cut from Head Start; 7.6 million kids will lose school lunches; 6.5 million children will lose health care. The list of programs to be cut — though they benefit people, providing all of us with a safety net — goes on and on.

Next Targets

These cuts are only the beginning. The House and Senate Budget Committees passed a resolution designed to balance the federal budget by

2002. In order to balance the budget while cutting taxes and increasing military spending, three programs essential to Americans will have to be destroyed: Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. The White House and Congress are preparing to attack these programs by laying down an ideological cover for their actions. This cover consists of a series of lies and distortions about these programs.

The political discourse about Social Security nicely illustrates the kind of lies and distortions to which we are exposed. Politicians claim, for instance, that Social Security spending contributes to the deficit. The fact is that Social Security trust funds have generated a surplus of between \$46 billion and \$53.5 billion over the last three years. Politicians claim that Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid are part of the budget (22 percent and 16 percent respectively). The fact is that Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid are not properly part of the budget but are, by law, trust funds with dedicated revenue sources and strict instructions on how those revenues are to be disbursed.

Politicians claim that Social Security will be bankrupt by the year 2009. The fact is that the system will only be bankrupt (1) if the U.S. Treasury does not pay the \$400 billion it has borrowed from the fund since the early 1980s for general budget items, and (2) if the gross domestic product (GDP) expands at a rate of 1.5 percent per year over the next 75 years. This growth rate is lower than the average growth rate in GDP during the Great Depression, which was 1.9 percent per year. If the U.S. Treasury were to pay back its IOUs to the Social Security Fund, or if the economy were to grow at an average of 2.5 percent per year over the next 75 years, Social Security would run a substantial surplus by 2070.

The real goal here is to privatize the Social Security Fund. Privatization would deny many even the inadequate protection they now receive from Social security (thus driving down the social wage) while at the same time would force many others to use private savings plans. Private savings plans would give bankers and financiers a large and easily accessible pool of cash that they could use as they — and they alone — see fit.

The Fightback

The so-called Contract With America and the broader bipartisan assault on the working class majority of this country represents the ruling

class response to the worldwide crisis of capitalism. Since the early 1970s, the ruling class has been less and less willing to maintain the social contract that existed since the end of World War II. Instead, the ruling class has shifted away from a social contract designed to secure domestic peace toward massive attacks on the working class, attacks motivated by ruling class efforts to maximize profits in the face of a worldwide crisis of overproduction and a falling rate of profit. In the U.S., this attack has led to workers' subsidizing corporations (via shifts in the tax burden, military spending and other corporate welfare), corporations' attacking workers' wages directly (by attacks on unions, use of "temporary" workers, increased de-skilling, speedup, and other strategies) and indirectly (by destroying government programs that provide workers with a social wage in the form of government services), and increasing repression and curtailment of democracy.

The latest attacks in this class war are generating a fightback which I believe is only just beginning. As the cuts go into effect (many on October 1) and more cuts are made, more and more groups will be driven to respond. At present, many groups opposed to the Contract are linked with the National People's Campaign (whose national office is located at 39 West 14th St., Suite 206, New York, NY 10011; Phone (212) 633-6646; Fax (212) 633-2889). The National People's Campaign was first organized by the Workers World Party but now has the participation of a broad range of activists. (The degree to which Workers World dominates the campaign's decision-making is unclear.)

The National People's Campaign called the May 6 national day of protest, in which hundreds of thousands participated around the country. In New York, for example, between 10,000 and 15,000 gathered at Times Square for a march and rally. In San Francisco, 10,000 marched and rallied. The National People's Campaign hosted a national conference on June 3-4, in which hundreds of activists from around the country participated. Current activities include local protests against the Personal Responsibility Act (which denies benefits to poor women and children) and a national car caravan that will converge on Washington, D.C., in October.

The National People's Campaign has a number of political weaknesses. It tends to place the blame on the Republicans and to see the Democrats as the solution (although in internal analy-

ses the National People's Campaign places blame on the Democrats as well). The lack of democracy is also a problem.

Revolutionary socialists should be active builders and organizers of the fightback. As activists we should:

- Emphasize the bipartisan, class nature of the attack;
- Fight for democratic functioning of all groups and coalitions;
- Seek to build broad coalitions in which people of color, women, and labor are integral participants.

Any fightback that sees the Democratic Party as our salvation will be doomed. An effective fightback will require class independence and a break from the Democratic Party. Decision making on a democratic basis is also essential if we are to mobilize large numbers of people. Women and people of color are especially hard hit by this attack on working people, and effective coalitions must have women and people of color in key leadership positions. Finally, only the labor movement has the institutional strength and resources to launch a massive fightback.

The ruling-class war on the working people of this country, which started in the 1970s under Nixon and became fully developed under Reagan and Bush, has entered a new, more vicious phase under the "New Democrat" Clinton and the Republican congressional majority. This war is driven by the crisis of capitalism, which will spur the ruling class to make even more brutal assaults on working people. The fightback is just beginning. □

August 5, 1995

I am interested in contacting all *BIDOM* readers who are currently active or would like to be active in organizing against the domestic cuts and other aspects of the so-called "Contract with America." If you are interested in exchanging ideas and information that would help strengthen organizing around the fightback, please contact me care of *BIDOM*, P.O. Box 470139, Chicago, IL 60647; or directly care of Department of Psychology, Box 3000, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN 56321-3000. I can be reached via e-mail at mlivingston@csbsju.edu. — M.L.

No Magic Bullets: Organized Labor Makes Plans

Continued from page 9

During June 6-9, 1996, LPA will hold a convention in Cleveland, Ohio, to launch a union-based labor party. Not since the Conference for Progressive Political Action, 1922-25, has such a wide range of unionists met to discuss, debate, and take action on labor's political future. While the assembled delegates will be unified in support of an American labor party in principle, a minority will be dissatisfied over the likely de-

cision of the majority to put off electoral activity for an indefinite period of time.

Although the majority will argue that further preparation is needed before a credible electoral effort can be mounted, their argument will be weakened by the knowledge that endorsing unions and LPA leaders will continue to support Democratic Party candidates, and not always reluctantly. While forecasts are always hazardous, it seems more likely than not that LPA will

not fade away after the Cleveland convention, no matter how much opinions are likely to clash. This will especially be true because of the sharpening class tensions caused by the continued upward redistribution of wealth. A labor party based on the unions will continue to be the only solid, viable political alternative to the status quo. □

August 6, 1996

Ernest Mandel and the Fourth International

by Frank Lovell

When Ernest Mandel died of a heart attack at his home in Brussels on July 20 this year at age 71 he left behind many unfinished projects, some having to do with economic theory and others with the political situation throughout the world and the viability of the revolutionary working class movement as embodied in the theory and organizational structure of the Fourth International. Although known and respected in academic circles as the outstanding post-war Marxist economist, the author of a two-volume work titled *Marxist Economic Theory* (1960) and the highly praised *Late Capitalism* (1972), among many other economic studies and books on the subject, Mandel was also the recognized theoretician and public representative of the Fourth International (FI), the mainstream of the world Trotskyist movement.

Ernest Mandel's father had been a critical-minded member of the German Communist Party. (Although Ernest was born in Frankfurt, Germany, his awakening to political consciousness took place in Belgium, where his family was living after Hitler's rise to power.) In his last book, Ernest tells us that he himself, as early as 1936, was pushed by events like the Moscow trials and the Spanish revolution in the direction of revolutionary Marxism: "It was under the influence of the committee to defend Trotsky, in Antwerp, as well as the influence of the Spanish Civil War, that I first began, at the age of 13, to sympathize with Trotskyism" (see *Trotsky as Alternative*, p. 58).

At age 17 under the Nazi occupation during World War II Mandel was already a Trotskyist and respected for his talent as a writer by his comrades in the Belgian underground section of the Fourth International. Joseph Hansen, who worked closely with Mandel in reunifying the Fourth International in the early 1960s, includes the following information about him in a footnote:

Ernest Mandel (1923–) joined the Belgian section of the Fourth International under the German occupation at the beginning of World War II. He was elected to the Central Committee in July 1941 and worked in the underground during the war. He was captured three times by the Nazis, escaped twice, and was deported to Germany shortly before the end of the war. (See *The Leninist Strategy of Party Building*, New York: Pathfinder, 1979, p. 539–540.)

Mandel's mentor in the Belgian section was Abram Léon, author of the controversial book *The Jewish Question — A Marxist Interpretation*. In a biographical sketch of Léon (which first appeared in 1946 in the French edition of Léon's work) Mandel wrote:

I met [Abram Léon] personally for the first time on the first central committee of the party which was reconstituted by his efforts in July 1941.

Mandel went on to explain that although Léon was absorbed in the daily organizational tasks of their underground group,

he devoted himself to elaborating an exact Leninist conception of the problem which was at the time agitating all revolutionists in the occupied countries, namely: the national question and its relation to the strategy of the Fourth International.



Ernest Mandel

This is introduced by Mandel as a bridge to polemicize against early postwar critics.

Let those who so readily incline to criticize the Trotskyist policy in Europe in relation to the national question read and study the documents which Léon elaborated during this period. Let them find out how preoccupied he was, as was the entire leadership of our party, with safeguarding, on the one hand, the Leninist program from the virus of chauvinism while defending Leninist tactics, on the other hand, against the myopia of sectarians, and they will see how foolish are their accusations to the effect that we "underestimated" the national question.

"The Myopia of Sectarians"

The above quotation is typical of Mandel's polemical style in the radical labor movement and to a lesser degree in the parlance of academia. He was a stickler for the facts as he was able to discern them in every situation, and in revolutionary politics his target remained — throughout his participation of more than half a century as one of the top leaders of the Trotskyist movement — "the myopia of sectarians." Like all serious revolutionists he was uncomfortable in small-group existence and sought always to become part of the working class mass movement and influence the course of political events. His last major polemical work was, in the tradition of Lenin, against ultraleft sectarianism. (See his feature article on "sectarianism vs. revolutionary Marxism" in

Bulletin In Defense of Marxism, No. 125, May-June 1995.) His basic contention was there clearly stated:

It remains an open question whether the FI will become the revolutionary mass International necessary for leading the international working class and allied mass movements to victory through simple linear progress. We very much doubt it. This was not the way the Third International was built in its best period either.

Regroupments and fusions will most probably occur, not necessarily from the start on a world scale. There is nothing wrong with that, provided they occur on the basis of a correct program and fully

Memorial Meetings for Ernest Mandel Slated for New York and Paris

The New York Marxist School and Monthly Review Press, together with our magazine and others, are sponsoring a memorial meeting for Ernest Mandel in New York City on September 24, 2 p.m., at the New School for Social Research, Graduate Center auditorium. (For more information, call Brecht Forum at (212) 481-0102, after 2 p.m.) Among the more prominent speakers expected are Marxist economists Paul Sweezy and Anwar Shaikh; Ernest Mandel's old friend Jakob Moneta (a German trade union activist of long standing); and Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, the candidate put forward by the Mexican section of the Fourth International in the 1988 presidential elections in Mexico. Speaking at the meeting in behalf of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will be Frank Lovell. Among organizations of the U.S. left that are helping to build the meeting and whose representatives will speak there are Socialist Action and Solidarity.

A major memorial meeting for Ernest Mandel is also scheduled for Paris on September 30. For more information on the Paris meeting, one may send a fax to the Bureau of the Fourth International at 4379 3961 in Paris, or use the following e-mail address: inprecor@igc.apc.org

respect internal democracy, the right of tendency, and the non-prohibition of factions (factions which we ourselves consider bad, but their banning is a cure worse than the illness).

Mergers and Fusions: A Guiding Principle for Mandel

This was a guiding principle for Mandel from his earliest days in the leadership of the European Trotskyist movement at the end of World War II. Always the decisive question was the Marxist principle that only the working class can reorganize society and eliminate the evils of capitalism, that to accomplish its historic mission the working class must organize its own vanguard political party, the party that proclaims socialism its goal. This is easy to say, summarizing what Marx taught. But to do it (or to devise ways to do it and help do it) is another matter. Mandel's contention that it will be done through mergers and fusions of political tendencies within the working class movement is based on the history of the Russian revolution and the Bolshevik party prior to the rise of Stalinism; and the history of the Trotskyist Left Opposition in its struggle against Stalinism in the USSR and elsewhere, and of the Fourth International after the Stalinist capitulation to Hitler in 1933.

Fusions and mergers do not occur in the abstract, but depend for success on finding the right answer to the key question: joining forces with whom and for what? and under what circumstances? This is what must be decided by revolutionary political tendencies within the working class in the course of struggle against the employing class, its political representatives and institutions.

The Anti-Nazi Resistance Movement in Europe

Mandel reviewed his own experiences and later evaluation of Trotskyist participation in the European resistance to Nazi occupation in World War II at a 1976 study class in London, sponsored by the International Marxist Group. He explained the resistance movement of 1941-45 in detail because, he said, "comrades of the Lutte Ouvrière group in France, have made it their special point of honour to raise this question against the Fourth International." Mandel explained:

The correct revolutionary Marxist position...should have been as follows: to support fully all mass struggles and uprisings, whether armed or unarmed, against Nazi imperialism in occupied Europe, in order to fight to transform them into a victorious socialist revolution — that is, to fight to oust from the leadership of the struggles those who were linking them up with the Western imperialists, and who wanted in reality to maintain capitalism at the end of the war, as in fact happened.

Possibility of Revolution in Western Europe

By way of explanation he added:

We have to understand that what started in Europe in 1941 was a genuine new variant of a process of permanent revolution, which could [have] transform[ed] that resistance movement into a socialist revolution. I say "could," but in at least one example that was what actually happened. It happened in Yugoslavia. That's exactly what the Yugoslav Communists did.

Reading these words today, 19 years after they were spoken, contemporary students may wonder if scattered groups of Trotskyists in several European countries could have accomplished what the numerically small (but well-organized) Yugoslav Communist Party, with some material support from the Soviet army and the Western Allies, was able to do. In retrospect it must be recognized, as Mandel reminded his audience nearly two decades ago, that history did not unfold as proletarian revolutionists in the war years had hoped it would, although they fought valiantly to change the course of events in the direction of socialist revolution.

Months before the surrender of Hitler's armies in 1945 Italian workers overthrew the fascist regime in their country, hanged Mussolini by his heels, and seemed ready to establish their own government, the first such development in war-torn Europe. News of these events in Italy (and shortly thereafter a similar uprising in Greece) inspired the Trotskyist underground in Belgium and France with new confidence and hope that workers in their coun-

Toronto Memorial Meeting for Mandel

Socialist Action of Canada has scheduled a memorial meeting for Ernest Mandel on September 10 at the SA hall in Toronto. Speakers will include:

- Judy Rebick, former president of the NAC (National Action Committee on the Status of Women), the Canadian equivalent of the U.S. organization NOW; Rebick is also co-host of a Canadian Broadcasting Company talk show called "Face-off."
- Leo Panitch, professor of political science at York University.
- Cherie MacDonald, longtime leader of the pro-choice movement in Canada.
- Joe Flexer, a veteran activist in the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW) and a longtime socialist and associate of Mandel's.
- Barry Weisleder, spokesperson for Socialist Action of Canada.

tries would soon rise up against the dispirited Nazi occupation forces. As Mandel later testified (in his biographical sketch of A. Léon) they sensed that they were part of a revolutionary wave that would sweep across the European continent. It did not happen. But the social forces that could have made it happen were at work at that moment in history, and the young Trotskyists felt in their bones that they were in tune with those forces.

This sense of destiny, acquired only through first-hand experience in powerful social upheavals, distinguished the wartime generation of European working class radicals. Mandel was one of the few who never lost his sense of historic destiny.

Revival of Fourth International after World War II

After the war European Trotskyists regrouped. Many prewar leaders of the movement were gone, killed by Nazi occupation regimes or by Stalinist agents in the underground resistance.

Among the missing were some of the most experienced and best qualified, including Trotsky (assassinated in Mexico), Marcel Hic in France, Pierre Tresso in Italy (former member of the Political Bureau of the Italian CP), Leon Lesoil and Abram Léon in Belgium, Poulipoulos in Greece, Widelin in Germany, and many more. Those listed here are only a few of the top leaders of the prewar Trotskyist movement. Their legacy served to reinforce and sustain those who met in Europe in the spring of 1946 to elect a new International Executive Committee, and to begin preparing for a World Congress. The young Ernest Mandel was elected to the top leadership body.

The 1948 World Congress (called the Second, the 1938 founding congress being the first) met in April and May. Twenty-two organizations from 19 countries were represented. Most of the discussion at the congress was about a document entitled "The USSR and Stalinism," presented by Ernest Mandel in the name of the International Executive Committee majority. Events following the war and positions formulated on the eve of the war (the theories of "state capitalism" and "bureaucratic collectivism" as alternate explanations to Trotsky's about the form of governmental control in the USSR) made the subject highly controversial. In some respects the debate was a replay of the 1939-40 faction struggle in the U.S. section against positions on the class character of the Soviet Union formulated by James Burnham and Max Shachtman (disputing that it remained a degenerated workers state).

The Second World Congress endorsed the document presented by Mandel, which was a reaffirmation of Trotsky's 1940 analysis that the Soviet Union remained a deformed workers state, unchanged in this respect by the war. Thus, the 1948 Congress effectively ended debate on that question inside the Fourth International.

New questions had arisen, however, as a result of the overthrow of the old prewar capitalist regimes in Eastern Europe and the creation of new governments under the aegis of the Soviet bureaucracy. Mandel argued that the East European states, then occupied by Soviet troops (except Yugoslavia), were in fact being used as "buffer states" by the Soviet government, and that economic forms of capitalist production remained unchanged. He also noted that the European Communist parties had become more reformist than prior to the war. These positions were adopted by the Congress. But the world's rapidly changing political situation (especially the emerging outlines of the Cold War, capped by the 1949 victorious Chinese revolution) fueled almost continuous review of these questions, and a host of unexpected new developments and issues.

Third World Congress (1951)

The Third World Congress was held in August 1951. Again discussion and debate centered on the Soviet Union and the crisis of Stalinism, and Ernest Mandel was in the middle of this discussion. By this time world-shaking new events were negating previously adopted analyses and contradicting anticipated developments. Nothing was turning out as expected. It wasn't only the Chinese revolution. The break between the Kremlin and Yugoslavia in 1948 (shortly after the conclusion of the Second FI Congress) had exposed weaknesses and limitations of Stalin's regime. Moscow was unable to isolate the Yugoslav leadership, to find serious opposition to Tito in the ranks of the Yugoslav CP, to attempt a coup, or to mount a military invasion. Then came the "police action" against North Korea in 1950, launched by U.S. imperialism under cover of the United Nations. Meantime the "buffer states" of Eastern Europe had been absorbed into the Soviet economic system, and a third world war seemed in the making.

The Congress adopted an omnibus document, "Theses on the International Perspectives and the Orientation of the Fourth International." These theses stressed the ominous threats of war, not dismissing the possibility of temporary compromises between the U.S. and the Soviet Union; and weighed the political consequences of the Chinese revolution, concluding that the global relationship of class forces had shifted to the disadvantage of world capitalism, in favor of socialism. They foresaw the strong possibility of war in the near future, but of a new kind described as "war-revolution." In such a war an imperialist victory would be "problematic."

Another aspect of these theses had to do with how the sections of the Fourth International should prepare in their respective countries for the coming global conflict, suggesting merger with (or "deep entry" into) the numerically large Stalinist parties in certain situations. All this was couched in speculative terms, depending on conjunctural twists and turns of world events, so that the precise meaning of exactly what should be done became ambiguous. In general the document seemed to be optimistic about the future and to hold out the prospect of revolutionary opportunity. It was adopted almost unanimously by the Third World Congress.

One of the leaders of the Fourth International and an author of parts of these theses on world revolution, Pierre Frank, wrote in retrospect: "Nobody at the time imagined that we were about to enter a period of economic prosperity in the capitalist world, the like of which had never before been seen in scope or in duration, a prosperity interrupted only by short, mild recessions" (*The Fourth International: Long March of the Trotskyists*, p. 90). This prosperity, of course, affected the social consciousness of the working class masses in the capitalist countries and profoundly influenced that historic period, planting the unresolved economic contradictions and social frustrations now plaguing the world.

Soon after this Third World Congress, when national sections of the Trotskyist movement undertook to implement the decisions taken, under the directives of the "international leadership" (residing in Paris), it became clear that very deep differences existed on the "dual nature of Stalinism" and the composition and political role of Communist parties in the major imperialist countries. The result was an organizational split, led on the one side by the American and British sections and on the other by the majority in Europe, lasting ten years (1953-1963).

Mandel and Breitman: Bridging the Split of 1953-63

During this period factional differences developed within the opposing organizational formations, and the majorities on each

side reached clearer political understanding of the big issues of the day. They found themselves in general agreement on the mass uprisings in East Germany in 1953 and in Poland and Hungary in 1956 against the oppressive Stalinist regimes in those countries. Besides this, a slim thread of unofficial communication was maintained intermittently between the two organizations during the split in the form of letters between George Breitman for the Americans and Ernest Mandel for the Europeans. When Breitman died in 1986 Mandel was reminded of their political association and affinity in the early years of that split, and wrote about it in his message to the Breitman memorial meeting in New York, as follows:

I first met George when he was in Europe in the aftermath of World War II and assisted, as an observer, in rebuilding a functioning center for our world movement. As the youngest participant in that effort, I learned a lot from him. In fact, if I would want to single out the persons from whom I learned most during the years following the war, I would name two SWP leaders: Morris Stein and George Breitman. This collaboration established the basis for a friendship which would last nearly forty years.

It was interrupted once, after the 1953 split in our movement. George and I were in the opposite camps of that split. But right after that split we exchanged a series of letters which became public, the only correspondence which maintained a dialogue between the two sectors of the split movement. For sure we both hotly argued for our — at the time different — causes. But if one rereads these letters today, one cannot fail to feel that behind the arguments there was a sincere, even desperate wish to prevent all bridges from being burned, to keep open an avenue for healing the split. That's why the blind factionalists in both camps disapproved of that correspondence. That's why we both were so happy when the split was healed in 1962–63, and felt that in a modest way we had prepared that reunification through our initial dialogue.

Reunification of Fourth International — and Debate on Guerrilla Warfare

The Reunification Congress of the Fourth International was held in June 1963 and adopted a document entitled “The Dynamics of World Revolution Today,” a document mainly written by Ernest Mandel, but influenced by an earlier document of the American SWP, mainly written by Joseph Hansen and entitled “For Early Reunification of the Fourth International”.* Mandel's “Dynamics of World Revolution Today” gives a wide-ranging analysis of the three sectors of the world revolution and their interaction at that time — the proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, the colonial revolution in the so-called Third World, and the political revolution in the Soviet Union and other workers states. This remained the guideline for all sections of the Fourth International through most of the 1960s and 1970s.

Fundamental programmatic differences developed within the leading bodies of the Fourth International in 1968 and at the Ninth World Congress in 1969 over the question of guerrilla warfare in Latin America. The debate continued for ten years, until 1978. It did not lead to an organizational split. The contenders constituted antagonistic camps, essentially the same as those in the 1953–63 split, the American Socialist Workers Party vs. the European Secretariat. But the debate was conducted within the organizational framework of the united Trotskyist movement and in accordance with its democratic norms.

Guerrilla fronts, seeking to imitate the success of the Cuban revolution, had been established by the mid-1960s in Guatemala,

Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru, followed shortly by “urban guerrilla” movements in Uruguay and Argentina. They seemed to be inspired rather than deterred by the defeat in 1967 of an expeditionary guerrilla force in Bolivia led by the legendary hero of the Cuban revolution, Che Guevara, who was captured by the Bolivian army and assassinated with the participation of an agency of the U.S. government, the CIA.

The debate within the Fourth International was in some ways reminiscent of earlier debates in the 19th-century Marxist movement, led by Marx and Engels against the anarchist Bakunin and by Lenin and Trotsky against Russian expressions of anarchism and individual terrorism. So it could have served an educational purpose, but the post-World War II generation of radicals (and especially those of the youth radicalization of the 1960s) showed little interest in lessons of history. They were motivated by lessons of the moment. Their heroes were Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, and other “revolutionists of action.”

Mandel Helps End the Debate on Guerrilla Warfare

As the debate unfolded over the ten years of its duration the failure of the guerrilla movement (in all its various forms and manifestations) finally convinced its supporters and sympathizers and would-be imitators that it had no future. By the time of the 1979 world congress all the steam of this debate had been vented. Earlier the Steering Committee of the international majority tendency (which had argued for the continent-wide strategy of guerrilla warfare in Latin America) had issued a “self-criticism on Latin America” in which it acknowledged that “a self-critical balance sheet of our orientation in Latin America as it was defined by the resolution adopted by the Ninth World Congress (1969) has long been necessary” (see Joseph Hansen, *The Leninist Strategy of Party Building*, p. 485). This paved the way to dissolving the factions and reconciling the differences. In this process Ernest Mandel, as a leader in the former majority tendency, played a crucial role. Life had overtaken and resolved the “guerrilla warfare debate” ahead of the factions. And Mandel helped everyone recognize that this was so.

At this juncture the crisis of leadership in the Fourth International was deeper and more deadly than anyone suspected. The Socialist Workers Party of the United States was then the best organized and wealthiest section in the international movement. Financially and professionally (in terms of a trained full-time paid staff of at least 200) it was the envy of the international movement. It had maintained representatives in Paris throughout most of the 1970s, consulting with and contributing to the work of the FI's center.

Polemics with the SWP's “New Leadership” over Their Break with Trotskyism

But by the end of the decade the “young leadership” in the SWP (consisting entirely of recruits from the student radicalization of the 1960s) had replaced the leadership of an earlier generation which had sustained the continuity of Trotskyism from the prewar era of working class struggles. This “young leadership,” under the direction of its most able member, Jack Barnes, began systematically in 1979 to prepare the SWP membership for the repudiation of Trotskyism and the abandonment of the Fourth International.

*For these documents, see the book *Dynamics of World Revolution Today* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978).

This preparation took the form of a sustained attack in SWP publications against the history of Trotskyism, seeking to show that Lenin as the recognized leader of the Bolshevik party had little or nothing in common with Trotsky's role in the organization and defense of the 1917 Russian revolution. In many ways this attack borrowed from and repeated earlier Stalinist slanders (preceding the infamous Moscow trials) against Trotsky and the Left Opposition in Russia. The purpose behind this, as later became clear, was to curry favor with the Castro regime in Cuba.

At about this same time the Socialist Workers Party of Australia (patterned after the U.S. party but lacking its experience and tradition) decided that Trotskyism provided no tools for further growth, left the Fourth International, and merged with a Stalinist group in Australia.

Ernest Mandel was one of those in the Fourth International who argued publicly against this backsliding from Trotskyism. See his polemic against Barnes's lieutenant Doug Jenness, "Debate over the Character and Goals of the Russian Revolution," in *International Socialist Review* (monthly supplement to *The Militant* newspaper), April 1982; Mandel's polemic against the Australian SWP appeared in the Fourth International's publication *International Viewpoint* in 1985.

Eventually the SWP leadership under Barnes took a route similar to the Australians, but more deliberately and with a more specifically defined aim. This took more time. In the summer of 1990 they formally notified the Fourth International of their departure. Since then they have tried to maintain an informal group of like-minded "communists" in a few other countries, the main purpose being to provide support to Cuba. At the 38th convention of the SWP in Oberlin, Ohio, in July this year the most important directive to the delegates and guests was "build the broadest possible delegation from the United States to the Cuba Lives International Youth Festival, which will be held in Havana and other Cuban provinces August 1-7" (*Militant*, p.1, August 7, 1995).

These breakaways from the Trotskyist movement were symptomatic of a general malaise among radicals in the industrialized countries during the 1980s, resulting from increased political arrogance on the part of the ruling class and lack of militancy in the institutions of the working class, especially the unions.

Analyzing World Changes in the 1980s

Throughout these years the leadership of the Fourth International, with Ernest Mandel as its most prolific writer and best-known representative, continued to analyze and explain the rightward political drift in the imperialist countries and the economic pressures that were creating new social divisions in the semicolonial countries. In early 1984 Mandel did an exhaustive survey of economic changes and new social forces at work in the so-called Third World, changes leading to class restructuring in that sector of the world. His study was titled "Semi-colonial Countries and Semi-industrialized Dependent Countries." He argued that

to take account of world reality today, Marxists should introduce new differentiation in the characterization of capitalist countries — that of semi-industrialized dependent countries, countries that preserve only some of the classical characteristics of semicolonial countries but no longer all of them, and should not be called so any more.

They are no longer characterized by a fundamental economic stagnation. They are no longer countries with a preponderant agricultural structure. They are no longer confined to the production and export of agricultural and mineral raw materials, nor to the production of a single crop or product.

Radical Influence Declines

Such observations at that time were perceptive and contributed to a better understanding of economic and social changes then under way, but they could not directly influence the conservatizing drift in political consciousness nor arouse the working class to mass actions in the industrial countries. Radical influence continued to decline in Europe and America throughout the decade of the 1980s, and to the present. This was reflected in the structure and composition of the Fourth International as well as in its leadership.

The 1995 World Congress

The Fourteenth World Congress, meeting in June this year, was noticeably smaller than the previous one, its decisions more cautious and tentative. As reported in *International Viewpoint* (the monthly publication of the Fourth International):

The Congress had four major debates. The first was a general discussion on the global situation organized around three themes — globalization and the crisis of capitalism, the major political tendencies of the current period, and the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe. The second debate represented an evaluation of the current situation and the perspectives in Latin America, with special attention to the evolution of the Castroist regime in Cuba. The third debate covered the general tendencies of the socio-political situation in Western Europe, with special attention on the state of the left and the response to the European Union. The fourth and final debate concerned the strategies and problems of construction of revolutionary parties and an international in the new global period.

This was the last congress attended by Ernest Mandel. Although frail and in ill health, he continued to play an active role, participating in debate and voting on issues. He remained optimistic about the future of the International, as in the days of his youth. In a letter after the Congress he wrote:

There were votes on the world political situation, on Eastern Europe, on Latin America, on a reorganization of the leading bodies of the International and their functioning, on finances, on some organizational disputes (commission reports), as well as on the document on building the International today.

On that last document I had also some misgivings and presented amendments which were rejected by a small majority.

I'm quite certain that this vote will be changed, probably already at the next IEC [International Executive Committee of the Fourth International] and that when the sections will understand what it is all about, there will be a large majority in favor of my position. I'm fully confident about the maturity of the main section of our leading cadre.

An Irreplaceable Loss

Ernest Mandel will be sorely missed in the councils of the Fourth International. His contributions to the working class movement since the end of World War II are unsurpassed. □

August 1, 1995

Ernest Mandel

by Jakob Moneta

Ernest Mandel was born April 5, 1923, in Frankfurt, and died July 20, 1995, in Brussels.

In the last of his numerous contributions to revolutionary Marxism, Ernest Mandel reminded us of the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach as the birth act of Marxism: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world...the thing is to change it." This is what he tried to do in all his life, but without underestimating the significance of the right interpretation of the world.

In his moving introduction to Abram Leon's book *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*, the 23-year-old Ernest Mandel, describing the disastrous situation under the Nazi occupation of Europe in 1940, wrote:

The situation seemed to justify only resignation and watchful waiting. Any other attitude appeared to be a manifestation of desperate and impotent revolt. What was lacking was not so much courage to act as courage to think correctly. Marxist analysis enabled one to penetrate through the totalitarian lid pressing on Europe and to discover there gestating forces which would in the end throw it off.

As the youngest member of the "Provisional European Secretariat" of the Fourth International, which operated in complete illegality during the war, Ernest (his pseudonym was Germain) contested vigorously the analysis of some older comrades. They were convinced that Nazi barbarism and the war had caused a degeneration of society. The forces of the socialist revolution had been drawn into the decadence of the capitalist system and would no longer be able to revolt, they believed.

In March 1944 Ernest was arrested when he distributed pamphlets to the workers of the Cockeril factory in Liège. He was deported to Germany, to a forced labor camp near Cologne, from which he escaped in April 1945. He always had the courage to act.

But then again he proved his courage to think. In the German edition of *The International*, which was printed in Belgium and smuggled illegally into Germany after World War II, he wrote that we would have a long period of economic *upturn* comparable to the years following the three wars won by Bismarck against Denmark, Austria, and France in the 19th century. Most of us believed there would be a repetition of the period after World War I — short upswings and long periods of decline. According to his theory of the *Long Waves of Capitalist Development* [the title of one of his books], the "long wave" after World War II was not simply a function of *Late Capitalism* [also

a title he gave to a book] but was connected with and dependent on the results of the class struggle.

His *Marxist Economic Theory*, and later *A Hundred Years of Controversy over Marx's "Capital"* as well as *Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy*, contributed to his worldwide fame as a scientifically qualified Marxist.

His special gift was his ability to explain complicated economic relations in understandable language. His *Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*, a small pamphlet resulting from lectures given at a socialist school in France, had a circulation of more than two million copies in about a dozen languages. In Germany during the student revolt of 1968 the Socialist Student Organization (which was expelled from the SPD, the Social Democratic Party of Germany) published more than 120,000 copies.

It is little known that Ernest Mandel was not only a theorist but an excellent journalist. For many years he was the editor of the newspaper *La Gauche/Links*, published by the left wing of the Belgian Socialist Party, and he contributed articles to the left press all over the world, some of them (under a pseudonym) to the newspaper of the German metal workers union (IGMetall), which had a circulation of two million.

His knowledge regarding trade unions was by no means just a theoretical one. He was one of the experts on the Economic Commission of the federation of the Belgian trade union movement (the FGTB) from 1954 to 1962 and the main adviser to André Renard, leader of the left in the Belgian trade unions, particularly during the general strike in Wallonia in 1960–61. Ernest Mandel was the "inspiration" behind André Renard's pamphlet *Through Struggle to Socialism* and the trade union program of "anticapitalist structural reforms" (embodying transitional demands).

That he was never allowed to visit countries under Stalinist rule goes without saying, but he was also barred at times from entering the United States, France, Australia, Switzerland, and of course for many years, Germany, even under a coalition government that included the German Social Democratic Party.

Of course, nobody is perfect. Ernest Mandel's predictions did not always come true, or perhaps in some cases have not yet come true. But he had the courage to admit mistakes he had

made and even to criticize the man for whom he had the greatest admiration — Leon Trotsky. In one of his last books, *Leo Trotzki*, published in German by the formerly Stalinist Dietz Verlag in Berlin, he writes about the "black years" of 1920–21, when Trotsky was sliding into "substitutionalism," justifying rule by the party in place of that of the working class, which led to extremely nasty consequences.

The mistakes regarding guerrilla warfare in Latin America and regarding the character of the revolution in Cuba, to which he was later invited by Che Guevara to discuss the economic problems of that country — all this is part of Ernest Mandel's biography.

So too is the book *Delightful Murder*, a "social history" of mystery stories — and he read hundreds of them — which found a public even among avowed non-Marxists, although it represents an analysis which is traditionally Marxist.

When Trotsky was killed by an agent of Stalin in Mexico it was not sure at all whether the Fourth International would survive. That it did survive into the 1990s is mainly to the credit of Ernest Mandel, with whom the Fourth International has often been identified.

Today, in a time of "worldwide crisis of credibility of socialism" resulting from the fact that "a growing number of workers understand the historical bankruptcy of Stalinism/post-Stalinism/Maoism/Social Democracy, and petty-bourgeois nationalism in several Third World countries" without any "credible alternative for overall radical social change," Ernest Mandel left us the following message:

Do not despair, do not succumb to resignation or cynicism, given the terrible odds we all have to face. Do not retreat into "individual solutions." (The fleshpots of the consumer society are still open for some, be it on a much more restricted basis than before.)...Never forget the moral commitment of all those who claim to be Marxists: the intransigent defense of the interests of the exploited and the oppressed on a world scale, everywhere, all the time. Never content yourself with purely propagandistic activities. Never forget the initial and final commitment of Marx: *Try to begin to change the world!* [From Ernest Mandel's speech at a meeting in New York City, November 11, 1994; see *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, May-June 1995.] □

French Marxist Journal on Ernest Mandel

The following is a translation, slightly abridged, of a notice written for the obituary section of the September 1995 issue of *Marxisme Aujourd'hui*, edited by Pierre Broué, one of our International Contributing Editors. The translation from the French, along with the notes and bracketed material, are by George Saunders. The notice lists other names Mandel used as follows: Ernest Germain, Pierre Gousset, Henri Vallin, Albert, and Walter.

Ernest Mandel died at home in Brussels on July 20. He was born in Frankfort-am-Main in April 1923. His parents left Germany when he was still quite young and found refuge in Belgium, settling in Antwerp. In Belgium, his father became active in the Trotskyist organization there, using the party names Henri Almond and Schake. Their house was a haven and center for German political refugees from the Nazi regime, most often Trotskyists. The Trotskyists were numerous in the Antwerp region, attracted there by the work available in the port. Thus, from an early age Ernest began to speak two languages;¹ at the same time he was absorbing the language of Marxism.

The circumstances in which he became a member of the Belgian section of the Fourth International, in 1939, were anything but wonderful; after all, it was “the midnight of the century,” the eve of World War II. The recruits to the organization in that year could be counted on the fingers of one hand. He worked vigorously to build the Belgian section, together with others of his generation, such as Abram Wajnstock, better known as Abram Leon, who became the general secretary of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Belgium. Ernest became part of the Central Committee of that organization in 1941; he was 18 years old.

He was arrested three times, and succeeded in escaping from the work camp at Wesseling the second time. In February 1944 he took part in a Europe-wide conference of decisive importance to the history of the Fourth International. In March the same year he was arrested and, after being sentenced at Liège to forced labor, was deported to Germany. His comrades of that time remember his solid reliability, his courage, and his passion for theory. He was only a little more than 20. With the end of the war and the liberation of prisoners from the camps, he resumed political activity. In 1946 he became a member of the International Secretariat (IS) of the Fourth International, at the age of 23. In an article elsewhere in this issue [of *Marxisme Aujourd'hui*] an oldtimer, Raoul, tells what “the young Belgian” was like then.

The story of Mandel’s life from that time on was identified with the history of the FI,

which he helped to build — and often to rebuild after the blows dealt it by government repression. Pierre Broué recalls having met Mandel for the first time in a clearing in the woods near Zagreb, where, seated on the grass, he engaged in passionate discussion with the German Wolfgang Leonhard. This son of an Old Bolshevik assassinated by Stalin had become a supporter of Tito.

Mandel was a close supporter of Michel Pablo [the sometimes high-handed chief secretary of the Fourth International], but began to oppose the new line that Pablo introduced in the early 1950s.² Mandel wrote “Ten Theses on Stalinism,” a document around which the opposition to Pablo was supposed to regroup, but later on he suddenly went over to Pablo’s positions, taking with him part of the leadership of the French section.

During the period of “deep entryism,” he was in the Belgian Socialist Party (SP) and also worked with the FGTB, the Belgian trade union federation, of whose Economic Commission he was a member. He was linked with the left wing of the SP, the main figure in which was the trade union leader André Renard and the chief editor of the newspaper *La Wallonie*.³

Mandel played a major role in the general strike [mainly in the Walloon region] in Belgium in 1960–61, for which he came under some heavy criticism [from spokespeople for the bosses and the status quo]. He was the chief contributor to the weekly of the SP left wing, *La Gauche/Links*, [which he edited] until his expulsion from the SP in 1964.

In the early 1960s the majority of the IS began to oppose the policies and leadership of Pablo. In this crisis Mandel remained firm in his opposition to Pablo, who had been the main leader of the FI [in Europe] after World War II. With Pablo’s departure, Mandel succeeded him in the Secretariat, which after the reunification of 1963⁴ became the United Secretariat. He engaged in prodigious activity as a political leader and a journalist — not only with the Trotskyist press; he was part of the initial editorial team of [the French left-wing newspaper] *l’Observateur*, writing under the pen name Pierre Gousset — but he was also a university professor, a lecturer, a public speaker, an author of articles, pam-

phlets, and books. (A partial bibliography of Mandel’s writings was published by *Rouge*, the newspaper of the French section of the FI, in its issue for July 27, 1995.) Besides all that, he was a world traveler, whose journeys took him to every continent, despite frequently being denied visas.

A comrade who, though not a member of his organization, knew him quite well and discussed with him widely on political issues of the day, told us the following:

What struck me most about Ernest was an enthusiasm that was constantly renewed but that sometimes carried over into a desire to please, to make concessions in order to seduce and win over longtime Stalinist or Social Democratic activists and an unshakable faith that these people could be convinced. This explains his errors, for example, in regard to Euro-Communism, which he had enormous illusions about. I had a private conversation with him on the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which he doubted would happen. Once again, he had such a strong belief (“*il y croyait*”): on this occasion it was his belief in the political revolution in East Germany, in the infinite possibilities of the militants who were standing up against the bureaucrats of the SED, etc.⁵ He wanted with all his heart to convince me, to take me by the shoulders and shake me, to assure me that I could not “miss out on this one.” I believe that I came to understand that day a most important facet of his personality: the generosity of a man who always wanted to convince others and bring them along. I believe also that that misconception led to disappointment and contributed to his death, the mistaken belief that reunification of Germany would “hinder or obstruct” the political revolution that he saw germinating.

Ernest Mandel suffered enormous grief from the tragic death of his companion Gisela. She had miraculously survived the Allied firebombing of Dresden near the end of World War II, but carried with her an incurable injury from that genocidal military operation.⁶ Later, when Ernest came to share his life with his current companion, Anne, it brought him much serenity and a joy in life that he greatly deserved. Those who loved Ernest Mandel — and they are numerous, including many who criticized and fought against him — send their regards to his companion. □

1. The reference is apparently to German and French; but Mandel also learned Flemish (Dutch), one of the two official languages of Belgium. He appreciated Dutch literature, recommended a volume of Dutch revolutionary poetry to me, and was very sensitive to the language question in Belgium, a key aspect of the national question there. — G.S.
2. Pablo predicted “centuries of deformed workers states” and advocated “deep entry” of Fourth International sections into the mass Stalinist and/or Social Democratic parties.
3. Wallonia, or the Walloon region, the French-speaking part of Belgium, was highly industrialized and long had a militant trade union tradition.
4. With the American Socialist Workers Party, led by James P. Cannon and others, and with other organizations of the International Committee (IC).
5. Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany), official name of the ruling party of the Stalinist bureaucracy in East Germany.
6. The terror bombing of Dresden, aimed against its civilian population, was a preparatory step toward even greater war crimes by the U.S. imperialist victors in World War II, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which are being widely discussed again in this fiftieth anniversary year.

Ernest Mandel: Capitalism's Optimistic Critic

by Tariq Ali

We reprint for the information of our readers, the following major excerpts from an obituary that appeared in The Guardian (London), July 21 or 22, 1995. Tariq Ali, in the late 1960s and early '70s, was a leader of the anti-Vietnam War movement in Britain and of the British section of the Fourth International. Educated at Oxford, Tariq was famous, among other things, for his debating skills. Other, debatable skills are touched on in his memoir Street Fighting Years. He did know Ernest Mandel well, and the information he shares, particularly about Ernest's family background and his experiences in the anti-Nazi underground, is likely to be of interest to our readers.

Ernest Mandel... was one of the most creative and independent-minded revolutionary Marxist thinkers of the post-war world. His writings on political theory, world history and Marxist economics were translated into 30 languages and in every continent. In a series of specialist works — Late Capitalism (1975), The Second Slump (1978), The Long Waves of Capitalist Development (revised and reissued in 1995) — he analyzed the functioning of capitalism in the West.

Mandel had been a prominent leader and theoretician of the Fourth International from the late fifties [actually, late 1940s] onwards, but even those on the left who were not sympathetic to his Trotskyist politics acknowledged his influence and demonstrated a respect for his razor-sharp intelligence. Only a few years ago, Mandel shared a platform in Madrid with the Prime Minister Felipe Gonzales and subjected his host to a severe tongue-lashing for arresting young people who were resisting conscription.

He was born in Belgium and educated at Brussels University and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. His father, Henri, a left-wing socialist, had opposed the first world war and fled from Belgium to Holland to avoid conscription. Here he met the German communist Wilhelm Pieck, and both men rushed to Germany after the fall of the Kaiser.

Henri Mandel worked in Berlin for several months as a journalist for the newly organized Soviet Press Agency. He also became a friend of Karl Radek, the Bolshevik emissary despatched by Lenin to speed up the German revolution.

Demoralised by the repression which followed the execution of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, Henri remained a member of the German Communist Party for only a few more years. Then he dropped out of active politics and moved to Antwerp. It was here that his second son, Ernest, was born.

Mandel was 10 when Hitler came to power. Years later he told me: "My father made some very sharp comments at the time on the incapacity of the social-democrats and the communists to resist fascism. I remember him saying 'This will end very badly. It could be the end for our people.'"

In 1939 Mandel joined a small Trotskyist group in Antwerp and was active in the Resistance during the occupation. He had been disgusted by the capitulation of the Belgian Socialist Party, whose leader, the deputy Prime Minister, made a public appeal to collaborate with the Nazis and was supported by an important section of the trade union apparatus. The official Communists published a legal paper under the occupation, basking in the deadly rays of the Stalin-Hitler pact.

Mandel was arrested for the first time for distributing seditious leaflets to the occupying German soldiers. He had subsequently hidden to observe the effect of anti-fascist propaganda on the uniformed Germans. He was a revolutionary and a Jew. The Nazis sent him to a transit camp for prisoners en route to Auschwitz. He escaped. The circumstances in which he freed himself are revealing and made a permanent mark that fuelled his optimism about the capacity of ordinary people to emancipate themselves.

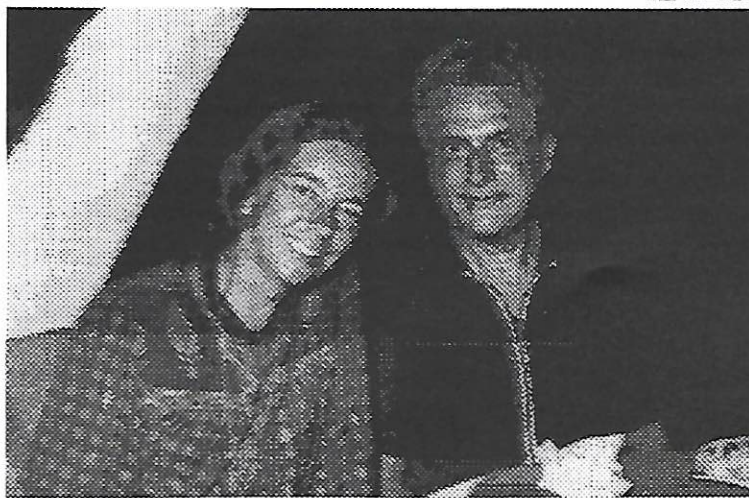
Always a strong believer in his own capacity to convince anyone of the merits of socialism, Mandel started talking to the warders. The other Belgian and French prisoners were anti-German and treated the warders, veteran employees of the German state, as sub-humans. Mandel started talking to them and discovered that some had been members of the now-banned social-democratic and Communist parties in Germany. The warders, on their part, were impressed by the precocity of the 16-year-old boy in their charge and actually helped him to escape.

Even though he was soon rearrested the experience had made him an internationalist. He steadfastly refused to write off a whole nationality because of the crimes of its leaders. A lesson learned when our century was engulfed in what seemed then to be a permanent midnight was applied more recently to the war in the former Yugoslavia. Mandel refused to permit his loathing of Milosevic and Tudjman to lead to a blanket condemnation of the Serbs or Croats.

After the war, Mandel devoted most of his energies to building the Fourth International as a world party for the socialist revolution. He genuinely believed that conditions would favour the re-birth of a movement not tarred with the crimes of Stalinism or the capitulations of social-democracy. During the late sixties and seventies, his polemical and oratorical skills (he spoke all the major languages of his continent) together with governmental paranoia led to his being barred from entering the United States, France, West Germany, Switzerland and Australia. He was deemed a threat to "national security."

The restriction on his movements sent him back to his old typewriter. Pamphlets and books emerged at an amazing speed. He was a great educator. His pamphlet, An Introduction to Marxist Economics, sold half a million copies. And yet a great deal of his life was spent on dealing with the views of rival Trotskyist groupings. Often, when I rang him during the seventies, and asked a polite "How are you?" the reply was never the same: "I'm just finishing off a draft reply to the sectarians in Ceylon on the Tamil question" or "Fine. Have you read my reply to the IS group on state capitalism?" or "Those sectarian idiots in Argentina have caved in to Peronism. Crazy people. Don't they understand?" They never did, but Mandel never stopped trying to convince...

He suffered a serious heart attack, which left him extremely frail, but up to the last he was thinking of new projects. "I can't decide what book to write," he told me last year. "A history of the European workers movement or the permanent and eternal links between capitalism and crime." In the event he wrote neither. □



Gisela and Ernest Mandel

Remembering Ernest Mandel

by Paul Le Blanc

The following statement is being proposed as a message from the Editorial Committee of Bulletin in Defense of Marxism to memorial meetings for Ernest Mandel scheduled in Toronto, New York, and Paris in September.

Some of us remember Ernest Mandel especially from 1968, when he toured the United States in the wake of the great May-June upsurge of students and workers in France. A dynamic and brilliant speaker, he emphasized to thousands of eager listeners the profound and liberating relevance of Marxism to our struggles — including the continuing and central relevance of working-class revolution, which many other spokesmen on the left had dismissed as an outdated notion. The historic events in France, which Mandel had seen and participated in, and the combined vibrancy and logic of his own Marxism — in which serious scholarship blended with passionate commitment, expressed clearly and eloquently — drew many of us to a more careful reconsideration of the classical revolutionary perspectives which he personified.

In that year the reality of events in Paris, in Prague, in Vietnam, and in cities throughout our own country convinced us as never before of the global relevance of the kinds of points that Mandel was making in his talks — that ours was an epoch of permanent revolution, that revolutionary change was necessary and possible and might even be achieved in our lifetimes through the struggles that we helped to build.

It was in 1968 that his two-volume work *Marxist Economic Theory* first appeared in English, along with his popularized *Introduction to Marxist Economics*, followed soon after by his scholarly study *The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx* — all of which contributed immensely to our education as Marxists. No less important were his political essays, and many of us studied and absorbed vital insights from his classic “The Leninist Theory of Organization” when it appeared in 1970.

Comrade Mandel’s writings on the perspectives of Leon Trotsky were no less important to us. His defense of Lenin’s and Trotsky’s political and organizational orientation, and of the revolutionary-democratic legacy of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, as being the antithesis of the bureaucratic authoritarianism and murderousness of Stalinism, was also an integral part of the great document of the Fourth International which he helped to produce — *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.

His never-ending labors to use the Marxist method to understand the complexities of the living realities of our time — reflected in such studies as *Late Capitalism*, *Beyond Perestroika*, *Power and Money*, and many others — have enriched the revolutionary Marxist arsenal and left us with an example of the kind of intellectual work that revolutionaries must en-

gage in to advance the struggle for human liberation. Among the points that he made in one of his recent tours in the United States is that Marxism must continue to grow if it is to remain alive, and that especially in recent decades it has become clear — for example — that it must absorb new insights from the feminist and environmental movements, that these must be essential elements of a revolutionary working-class perspective.

Although he was a revolutionary internationalist of the highest caliber (or perhaps it would be truer to say: *because* he was a genuine revolutionary internationalist), Comrade Mandel was deeply concerned with — and immensely proud of — the working-class movement and the traditions of militant class struggle in his native Belgium, and of the Belgian section of the Fourth International, the SAP (Socialist Workers Party). Never going along with the fashionable panacea of “third-worldism,” he was convinced that European revolutionaries such as himself must never cease in the efforts to help the European working class advance in its own struggles and to realize its revolutionary potential. He saw this as central to the advance of the world revolution, and as a central task of European Trotskyists.

At the same time, he saw the global interconnectedness of the class struggle and of revolutionary struggles on all continents and in all countries. Among the most memorable experiences for many of us was his magnificent speech in 1989 at a New York rally in defense of the Chinese students and workers who struggled and, in many cases, died for democracy (for rule by the people) in Tiananmen Square.

We also knew him as one of the most enthusiastic and insightful supporters of the Nicaraguan revolution. His belief in the power and the necessity for uncompromising struggle of the South African working class was also well known. He was no less animated over the possibilities and dangers facing workers and revolutionaries in Brazil. And his hopes for the workers of the former USSR and other Eastern European countries once dominated by Stalinist dictatorships, were grounded in a deep belief — which he never lost — in their potential for establishing their own democratic control over the economic and political life of their countries.

He also had hopes for the struggles of the working class and oppressed sectors of the United States, and he expressed to some of us his deep respect — despite certain differences — for the Cannon tradition of American Trotskyism. In the 1980s, as the new leadership of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party was breaking

from that tradition and rejecting the program of the Fourth International, Mandel was one of the strongest voices in our world movement to challenge this destructive course. It was in this period that the magazine *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* was established, and he associated himself with it as an international contributing editor.

The focus of Comrade Mandel’s internationalist commitment was the worldwide organization of revolutionary parties and groups, the Fourth International. In more ways than one, he invested all that he was into this global expression of revolutionary Marxism. He was its foremost theorist, educator, and spokesperson, and yet he devoted immense energies to helping develop and maintain a collective leadership in which comrades from generations younger than his own — fully representative of the various national sections of the International — are predominant.

He gave special attention to maintaining various aspects of the International which enabled revolutionaries from various lands to share their experiences and insights with each other and to develop a common, genuinely internationalist orientation for revolutionary Marxists and working-class militants. The publications of the Fourth International, especially *International Viewpoint* and *Imprecator*, as well as the World Congresses of the Fourth International, and the meetings of the world organization’s International Executive Committee and United Secretariat, were all among his highest priorities.

He also gave significant attention to the international school, which was devoted to the education and development of cadres from many countries. I vividly recall the week he spent with the class which met there in 1987, and how important it obviously was for him, given the amount of time and energy he devoted to it: about half a dozen formal lectures of high quality, several less formal sessions discussing various political and historical questions, plus a significant amount of social time spent relaxing and chatting with school participants, and being available for a number of individual discussions as well.

The passion he had for reaching out to comrades, revolutionary activists, left-wing scholars, and working-class militants — to share with them the vital store of ideas and insights associated with the Marxist and Leninist and Trotskyist traditions — knew few bounds.

One of these few bounds which developed in the late 1980s was the serious decline of his health. One could no longer say that he was “tireless,” and yet despite the strain and sometimes near-exhaustion, he kept reaching out. His visits and tours to the United States would sometimes alarm some of us — the toll they seemed to take on him was sometimes quite visible, and we felt he should not subject himself to such stress. On these later tours some of us got to know his wife Anne, a strong, caring, and admirable person, who obviously was able to give him considerable support — such as drawing him to concerts, art museums, and other relaxing and soul-nourishing activities.

Continued on page 25

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A Comment on Other Writings by Ernest Mandel

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These scattered, often uncollected essays and polemics in various left publications are extremely important. Since the 1960s Ernest Mandel was in many ways the foremost spokesperson for Trotskyism in the world and perhaps the most outstanding defender of Trotsky's views, and these writings reflect that role. He reargued the key issues of the Trotsky-Stalin dispute in the pages of *New Left Review* (see Nicolas Krassó, *Trotsky: The Great Debate Renewed*, St. Louis, 1972); he debated on Marxist economics and the class character of the Soviet state and other so-called "socialist" states with Paul Sweezy in the pages of Sweezy's *Monthly Review* ("Why the Soviet Bureaucracy Is Not a Ruling Class," *MR*, July-August 1979), and engaged in similar debates with Hillel Ticktin, editor of *Critique* magazine, and in *Review of Radical Political Economics*, journal of the Union of Radical Political Economists.

Also, he debated with the British economist Alec Nove on the idea of market socialism, in *New Left Review* in the 1980s; debated in the early '70s and the early '90s with British supporters of the "state capitalist" theory (see, for example, "The Fallacies of 'State Capitalism' — Ernest Mandel and Chris Harman Debate the USSR," published by *Socialist Outlook*, November 1991); debated Gregor Gysi, head of the reformed East German Stalinist party, and also Monty Johnstone of the British CP; he defended Trotskyism against Doug Jenness, who presented the "new views" of the Jack Barnes leadership team in the U.S. Socialist Workers Party in the early 1980s, and against the Australian SWP in 1985 (see the references in Frank Lovell's article elsewhere in this issue of *BIDOM*). These were especially important debates. In the end, despite areas where we might disagree with him, Ernest Mandel proved to be one of the most consistent and articulate defenders of Trotsky's views, that is, of Marxism in the 20th century.

Revolutionary Optimism in a Skeptical Age

Ernest Mandel, *The Place of Marxism in History* (Humanities Press, 1994), \$9.95; and Ernest Mandel, *Revolutionary Marxism and Social Reality in the 20th Century: Collected Essays* (Humanities Press, 1993), \$19.50.

Reviewed by Sean Flynn

In the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, Marx observed that “the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.” Read together, these two books by Ernest Mandel lucidly explain how Marx and Engels — and the movement they founded — created and maintained a framework for both understanding and transforming social reality, and thus for the emancipation of humanity. They also serve as testimony to the lifelong devotion which our late comrade gave to the working class, the subject, object, and instrument of that emancipation.

The Place of Marxism in History reviews the remarkable accomplishments of Marx and Engels during the 19th century. Originally a series of lectures given by Mandel to commemorate the centenary of Marx’s death, this work situates the origin of historical materialism in the emergence and maturity of the capitalist mode of production. The sweep of the essay gives the reader a true appreciation for the genius of Marx and Engels in unifying the disparate threads of social science into a “field theory” capable of arming the working class in its long march to socialism. Yet *The Place of Marxism* does not assess the development of Marxism and the Marxist movement through present times. This is left to the second book — a collection of essays written over 40 years of activity in the Trotskyist movement. The collection of articles contained in *Revolutionary Marxism and Social Reality in the 20th Century* elaborate, or are examples of, efforts in our century to maintain the vitality of Marxist method and principles.

The Legacy of Marx and Engels

The Place of Marxism describes historical materialism as, in Mandel’s words, a “quadriple synthesis,” first of the main social sciences — German philosophy, French social historiography, and English political economy; secondly, of these sciences with the project of emancipating humanity from class society; third, of the fusion of the age-old desire for emancipation with the emergence of the social force capable of realizing it — the working class; and finally, the junction of the workers movement with revolutionary action and organization.

The great merit of Mandel’s essay is its concise yet readable description of the development of these syntheses. Mandel is able — in 70-odd pages — to draw together the

Marxist analysis of class society and the role of the state in mediating class contradictions; the laws of motion in a capitalism constantly revolutionizing production yet doomed to flirt with crises born of its very success; the tendency for the struggle over the division of the social surplus to challenge the dominance of capital; and the injection of these analyses into, and their utilization by, the developing movement of the working class; all the while showing how these discoveries were the product of the political and intellectual battles engaged in by Marx and Engels over half a century.

Of particular interest to socialist militants is Mandel’s tracing of revolutionary continuity and organization back to the first mass revolution of the modern era in 1789, and to the travails of early militants — Babeuf’s “Conspiracy of Equals” and the handful of revolutionists around Blanqui who kept the faith during the passive decades that preceded the uprisings of 1848. These revolutionary ancestors bore the birthmarks of their pre-industrial origins, lacked a clear conception of the goals of the revolution, and were wedded to conspiratorial organizational conceptions and putschist views of revolution.

Nevertheless, these militants understood that only through “political action for the conquest of power” (Mandel’s words) could society be transformed. It was left to Marx and Engels to clarify communism as the revolutionary goal, to advocate the need for legal and mass organization of the working class for the movement to feel and exercise its power, and most importantly, to conclude that a successful revolution could only be made by the majority of society — the self-emancipation of the producers.

Yet none of these principles, nor the other theoretical conquests of Marx and Engels, dropped fully formed from the sky. As Mandel illustrates, they were the product of a continuing struggle of ideas submitted to the test of application in the real struggle between social forces and their ideological representatives. If the revolutions of 1848 or the Paris Commune triggered an appreciation for mass democracy and majority revolution, so quieter struggles in the British Museum led to the discovery of the subterranean currents governing capitalism. In tying all of their greatest works — from *The German Ideology* to *Anti-Dühring* — to the turning points in their political and intellectual lives, Mandel reveals not only the vibrant development of Marxism as a body of thought but also the remarkable place of Marx and Engels in guiding that development.

In analyzing the role of individuals in history, Marxists have noted the confluence of “historical necessity” with the apparently co-

incidental appearance of particular persons. Mandel writes that in the case of Marx and Engels, “‘historical necessity’ was filtered through specific personalities who could not alter its fundamental course, but could, to a point, impart their individual imprint and characteristics to it.” Commenting on the tension between “historical necessity” and chance, Trotsky once wrote that “leaders are not coincidentally created, they are gradually chosen out and trained up in the course of decades, [and...] they cannot be capriciously replaced...” *The Place of Marxism in History* is an excellent review of the selection process which laid the framework for Marxism.

Revolutionary Continuity

But because the goal of *The Place of Marxism in History* is to precisely situate the emergence of historical materialism along the time line of human history, at its end the reader is left somewhat suspended at the beginning of the 20th century, a century whose convulsions posed new tests for Marxism, and which saw its analyses successively sharpened and enriched by activists like Mandel who sought to apply them to capitalist and post-capitalist society. It is in this context that *Revolutionary Marxism and Social Reality in the 20th Century* makes its mark.

“Trotsky: The Man and His Work” and “Solzhenitsyn’s Assault on Stalinism” serve to extend the continuity of Marxism through the lives and work of Lenin and Trotsky. In the first essay, written nearly 50 years ago, Mandel wrote that

like any method of investigation and systematization of the facts of experience, Marxism can be maintained only on condition that it be continually enriched. Any attempt to fall back defensively on “tradition,” without any effort to pass new developments which are continually taking place through the sieve of the materialist dialectic, is certain to bring about a fatal ossification of the theory and to end in its certain death.

In both essays, Mandel surveys the separate paths the Bolshevik leaders took to the October Revolution, reminds us that the creation of the first workers state could only have been the product of an enriched Marxism, and defends that revolution from those who, like Solzhenitsyn, view it as inevitably leading to Stalinism.

Yet, as Mandel points out in “Trotsky,” the ossification of Marxism was in large measure avoided because of the presence of Leon Trotsky. Trotsky, writes Mandel,

filled the gap created in the history of the working-class movement by the disappearance of one whole generation, which was corrupted and physically broken by Stalinism, demoralized by the dismal suc-

cession of defeats, and annihilated by the mounting waves of reaction and fascism.

To Trotsky we owe the concept and strategy of permanent revolution as a particular application of the theory of uneven and combined development (discussed in a separate essay in this volume), the analysis of the degenerated workers states and of the rise of fascism, the elaboration of the united front, the systematization of the transitional method, and the creation of the Fourth International to maintain the interests and continuity of the international working class and serve as a collective center for revolutionists from all over the world. But Trotsky's insistence on a new international is incomprehensible without an understanding of why revolutionary parties need to be built and maintained.

The Role of Vanguard Organizations

In "The Reasons for Founding the Fourth International," Mandel explains that the optimism of revolutionary Marxism is founded on the fact that the contradiction between the expanding productive forces and the fetters imposed by capitalism "is also expressed through periodic rebellions of the human forces of production" which "represent an instinctive attempt by the proletariat to reorganize society upon a new socialist basis." Yet "a socialist revolution can only achieve its goals consciously." Hence, Mandel writes, "the outcome of the successive waves of explosive mass struggles does not depend only on the objective social relationship of forces between the capitalists and wage earners. It also depends on the relative level of proletarian class consciousness and the revolutionary quality of its leadership." It was no understatement that the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International, spoke starkly of the crisis of proletarian leadership.

Key sections of *Revolutionary Marxism and Social Reality* are accordingly devoted to the task of building revolutionary parties. "Rosa Luxemburg and German Social Democracy" is an appreciation of Luxemburg's struggle against the conception prevalent in the SPD [*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* — Social Democratic Party of Germany] of the "historical inevitability" of socialism. In opposition to this routinist determinism, whereby capitalism would collapse from its own weight, Luxemburg emphasized the goal of "political action for the conquest of power," and reinjected the active role of the workers and the mass political strike in achieving that goal. Yet Luxemburg realized too late that a revolutionary organization cannot be built overnight. Her death and the defeat of the German revolution of 1918-19 were the result.

In "The Leninist Theory of Organization," Mandel tries to analyze the role of a vanguard party, tying its emergence and fortunes to the ebb and flow of class consciousness in the various layers of the proletariat — among the masses, the advanced workers, and the revolutionary nuclei. The revolutionary party is not an expression of lack of faith in the class. Rather, Mandel writes, "the difference between the Leninist theory of organization and the so-called theory of spontaneity... is thus to be found not in an underestimation of mass initiative but in an understanding of its limitations."

A layer of advanced workers, and in that sense, a "vanguard," is always present in industrial society to varying degrees. He continues:

The difference between "spontaneous" actions and those in which "the revolutionary vanguard intervenes" is essentially that in "spontaneous" actions the nature of the intervention of the vanguard elements is unorganized, improvised, intermittent, and unplanned... while the existence of a revolutionary organization makes it possible to coordinate, plan, consciously synchronize, and continuously shape this intervention of the vanguard elements in the "spontaneous" mass struggle.

The task of the organized vanguard, working in the mass movement, is to raise the consciousness of the great majority in action, through the linking of immediate demands to transitional demands which challenge capitalist rule.

One aspect of the struggle which could have been elaborated on further is the tension between the rising consciousness of the advanced layers and that of those millions still under the sway of the mass reformist parties. Here, a discussion of the united front would have been useful. One can explain the downplaying of this issue perhaps by noting that when "The Leninist Theory of Organization" was written (1970), much of the far left was still under the heady influence of the French worker-student uprising of May-June 1968.

This article and another entitled "Vanguard Parties" also discuss democratic centralism and the problem of bureaucracy. "Vanguard Parties" somewhat blithely reduces democratic centralism to its political dimension, the "centralization of experience, centralization of knowledge, centralization of conclusions drawn out of actual militancy." For its part, "The Leninist Theory of Organization" draws attention to the material causes of bureaucracy in the Social Democratic and Communist parties. Yet even a decade ago, when "Vanguard Parties" was written, we had already observed the degeneration of non-Stalinist, non-Social Democratic, supposedly "revolutionary" organizations — such as those led by Healy, Lambert, Posadas, Barnes, and Moreno. The problems of cul-

tism, dogmatism, and sectarianism in small isolated grouplets — and the role of organizational "norms" in strengthening these diseases — continue to plague our movement.

Revolutionary Optimism

In our troubled times, at the apparent nadir of the socialist movement, when nationalism and religious fundamentalism are in full flower, the post-capitalist societies are in ruin or under siege, when the welfare state and even progressive taxation are under attack, Mandel's essays serve as a reminder of the long view: that while the ebbing of the class struggle takes on exaggerated length in relation to the memory of an individual, all history continues to be, as Marx pointed out 150 years ago, the history of class struggles.

The nub of the question is the very possibility of revolution today. In "The Reasons for Founding the Fourth International" and "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," Mandel reiterates that the need for the transformation of society is rooted in the failure of the prevailing relations of production to contain the developing forces of production (or the parallel problem in post-capitalist societies of the political relations retarding the forces of production).

The belief that the revolutionary threat has faded is thus premised on the unfounded belief that previous social revolutions were anomalies restricted to relatively backward countries; that the German Revolution of 1918, the Spanish Revolution and French General Strike of 1936, the May-June upsurge of 1968 in France, the Italian "Hot Autumn" of 1969, and the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-75 — like the two world wars — were aberrations from the "norm" of stability in the advanced capitalist countries. As for the 20 years since the last outbreak, one need only recall that half a century of relative social peace in Western Europe separated the Paris Commune from the turbulent three decades which followed August 1914.

Mandel reminds his readers of the concept of historical time, and of Trotsky's admonition in the "Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution":

[It] is necessary to prepare for long years, if not decades, of war, uprisings, brief interludes of truce, newer wars, and new uprisings... The question of tempo and time intervals is of enormous importance; but it alters neither the general historical perspective nor the direction of our policy. The conclusion is a simple one: it is necessary to carry on the work of educating and organizing the proletarian vanguard with tenfold energy.

Fortified by Mandel's unshakable optimism, these two books are important tools in working toward social emancipation. □

Ernest Mandel on Trotsky and Trotskyism

Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative* (London: Verso, 1995). Translated by Gus Fagan. 186 pp.

Reviewed by Joe Auciello

In a book review concerning the New York intellectuals of the 1940s, *Nation* columnist Christopher Hitchens mentions in passing, as if stating the obvious, that “long after Trotskyism has become irrelevant, the admonishing figure of Trotsky has not.”¹

The idea here is familiar enough so that Hitchens feels no need to explain. Let us, nonetheless, hear the explanation. Leon Trotsky, so this argument goes, can be admired for numerous virtues: his personal qualities, especially intellectual honesty and courage, his political analysis of and opposition to the Stalin regime, his literary skill, and so on. On the other hand, to continue this argument, Trotsky’s political work which culminated in the founding of the Fourth International was futile, or doomed at birth. Those efforts, according to Hitchens and many others, supposedly ended in “irrelevance.”²

Even if well-intended, this is the kind of appreciation that does not simply situate Trotsky in his time; it relegates Trotsky to the past, leaving him confined to the history books, albeit with a more favorable chapter than he may have received in previous decades. His defiance of fascism and Stalinism are viewed as admirable, but useless, existential gestures with no practical effect, heroic precisely because of their inevitable failure. Supposedly, there is nothing to learn from Trotsky, and only simpletons or sectarians would try to draw meaning from a tradition that was buried in Mexico 55 years ago. The conclusion to this argument, obviously, is that Trotsky and the ideas he defended and developed have little to do with the present world.

Ernest Mandel’s new book, *Trotsky as Alternative*, his last original work to appear in English, is an implicit rebuttal to this view of Trotsky. Through an analysis of Trotsky’s political, social, and economic thought and his contributions to Marxism, Mandel shows why the ideas of revolutionary Marxism that have come to be called “Trotskyism” continue to be essential for those who seek to create a socialist vision of humanity’s future. Mandel concludes his opening chapter, “Trotsky’s Place in the Twentieth Century,” with these words, which form the thesis of his book:

...Trotsky’s theoretical and political achievements are without parallel in this century. He will go down in history as the most important strategist of the socialist movement. And now even more so, when the clearly recognized bankruptcy of Stalinism and Social Democracy put the debate about socialism once again on the historical agenda, Trotsky’s inheritance will assume even greater importance as the main historical alternative to both those currents in the modern labour movement.³

Trotsky as Alternative is a relatively brief, topical exposition of Trotsky’s major political ideas that presupposes some acquaintance with Marxism, the Russian revolution, and the main outlines of Trotsky’s own life. As can be expected, major chapters are devoted to permanent revolution, Stalinism and bureaucracy, fascism, and the vanguard party.

Other chapters examine Trotsky’s relation to Third World liberation struggles, the national question in various countries, the Jewish question, and Trotsky’s role as military leader, economic strategist, and literary critic. The study concludes with Mandel’s personal assessment of “Trotsky the Man.”

Although *Trotsky as Alternative* is not a “...for Beginners” book (a *Trotsky for Beginners* was published in 1979, written by Tariq Ali), for readers new to Marxism this work should still prove valuable, particularly if read after an outline like Mandel’s *Introduction to Marxism* or Isaac Deutscher’s three-volume biography of Trotsky. More experienced readers will find stimulating Mandel’s comments on, and plentiful references to, the secondary literature surrounding Trotsky and the debates on the political concepts associated with him. Mandel’s remarks on this material, though subordinate to his primary purpose of exposition, constitute a secondary but sustained polemic in defense of Trotsky’s theories and heritage. It is a defense, however, that does not shrink from criticism (for instance, of Trotsky’s justification for the abridgment of proletarian democracy in Soviet Russia in the post-Civil War period, and his mistaken prognosis of the fate of Western capitalism and the Soviet Union following the Second World War), and it refers to contemporary history and research to assess the validity of Trotsky’s major ideas.

Mandel’s study reaffirms the importance of Trotsky’s theoretical and political activity, particularly in the last decade of his life. One of the

most controversial was the decision to create a new, revolutionary International to replace the Comintern. Mandel argues that the decision to form the Fourth International was not wrong in its time, nor is it obsolete today:

...a genuine growing together of real mass movements and real mass struggles into a genuine mass international is only possible if such an International addresses itself to the most important goals and demands of all sections of the world proletariat. There are, in the world today, numerous new and not so new radical currents in the mass movements.

But outside the Fourth International founded by Trotsky, there isn’t a single one which unconditionally supports the demands and struggles of the exploited and oppressed in the Third World, in the imperialist states and in the post-capitalist societies. That is its greatest strength; it is founded on the theoretical and strategic inheritance of Leon Trotsky and on the “categorical imperative” of Karl Marx [to “change the world”].

The struggle for the mass international of tomorrow is today, and probably for a long time to come, linked to the struggle to build the Fourth International, although it is not reduced to this and includes numerous forms of international action and co-operation with broader forces in the framework of a united front. In this concrete sense, Trotsky’s initiative in founding the Fourth International was actually his most important achievement. It ensured not only a continuity of the Marxist programme and the struggles for socialism, a continuity threatened by the crimes of Stalinism and reformism; it also created an organizational framework within which an ongoing common activity, based on voluntary co-operation and a common programme, welded together a genuine international political group of cadres that practices an exemplary, lively and uninhibited internationalism in many areas of political life far beyond the borders of its own still numerically weak organization.⁴

Another essential component of Trotsky’s thought which Mandel discusses, one of Trotsky’s major contributions to Marxism, is his analysis of Stalinism and the growth of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union that led to the degeneration of the first workers state. This is an analysis which Mandel has defended in frequent debates with different Marxists and scholars such as Paul Sweezy, Hillel Ticktin, Chris Harman, Alec Nove, and others. As Mandel explains here:

It was Trotsky’s great theoretical achievement...[to recognize] the social degeneration of

1. Christopher Hitchens, *For the Sake of Argument* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 206.

2. Alex Callinicos, *Trotskyism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990). Callinicos observes that Ronald Segal, in his biography *The Tragedy of Leon Trotsky*, “dismisses Trotskyism as ‘a factional disorder.’ This accurately summarizes the dominant image of Trotskyism as a welter of squabbling sects...As we shall see, this image has a large degree of truth.” Despite this statement, however, Callinicos concludes that “Trotskyism will claim its own place as the continuation of the classical Marxist tradition with its orientation on working-class self-emancipation from below.”

3. Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative*, p. 10.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

the Soviet bureaucracy, in other words, the transformation of this bureaucracy into a specific social layer with its own particular material interests. This was something which, apart from Trotsky, even the most competent Marxists in the leadership of the Russian Communist Party either did not recognize or did not recognize adequately...

Numerous non-bourgeois critics of the Stalin dictatorship...have criticized this judgement of Trotsky's. Alternative positions — state capitalism, "new class" and "bureaucratic collectivism" — still attract support...In the light of the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, with its tendency toward the restoration of private capitalism, these theories have lost a lot of their attraction. This is not the case, however, with Trotsky's theory of a bureaucratized workers' state...the theory of a transitional society between capitalism and socialism, which explicitly included the danger of capitalist restoration.⁵

Duncan Hallas has described Trotsky's theory of the degenerated workers state and the strategies which flow from this analysis as follows:

This was the assessment Trotsky bequeathed to his followers, and...it would disorient them. But the existence of a wing of the bureaucracy wishing to restore capitalism proved to be a myth at least on any relevant time scale.⁶

Today, of course, Hallas's words do not read so well. Mandel answers this kind of objection as follows:

Trotsky regarded the dictatorship of the bureaucracy as a historically transitional phenomenon which would, at least in the long term, lead unavoidably to a restoration of capitalism if it were not replaced before this by a restoration of workers' power, of soviet democracy. Council (soviet) democracy, however, could not be won by means of a self-reform of the bureaucracy but only by means of a real revolution from below...

Without doubt, Trotsky was mistaken about the rhythm of "the mobilization of oppositional

forces." He underestimated the depoliticizing effects of the terror, the fear and atomization of the working class. But the long-term tendencies of development are described...in a masterly and prophetic manner. Sixty years later there is little that needs to be added to this analysis. It reads as a description of the systemic crisis of the Soviet Union, which today is so clear to everyone.⁷

Some Flaws

One could continue and document the strengths of *Trotsky as Alternative*. Yet, there are flaws to be noted in this book, especially those which indicate signs of hasty composition. For instance, while the chapter on "Trotsky and the National Question" is structured sensibly ("We shall...look at those statements of [Trotsky's] on the national question which express most clearly his principled attitude to this question"), some sections of the chapter, unfortunately, are far too brief. Mandel's account of Trotsky's ideas on Black self-determination in the U.S. takes up less than a page. In a polemic thirty years ago with Gerry Healy and the then Socialist Labour League in England, Mandel wrote very well and in more telling detail about Trotsky's theory of the Black struggle and the appropriateness of that theory to the particular conditions in mid-1960s America.⁸

At public meetings in the United States, I recall that Mandel showed a ready knowledge of the issues involved in busing and self-determination — in statements given extemporaneously, usually in response to hostile questions from antagonistic members of the audience. The brevity of his remarks in this chapter, therefore, is disappointing.

The same point can be made about Mandel's treatment of Trotsky and South Africa; a lengthy quotation from Trotsky about the absolute necessity of Black self-determination is followed by a single sentence asserting the relevance of his theory. A fuller explana-

tion of this relevance would have been welcome.

Further, the style and clarity of the prose is not always up to Mandel's usual high standard. For instance, the chapter, "Trotsky and the Jewish Question" takes up eight pages and includes 35 footnotes. A rewritten chapter would have incorporated some of those footnotes into the main body of the text, perhaps expanding some and deleting others. A better organized, more readable chapter would have resulted.

Given that Mandel has written on these topics many times, including an earlier book on Trotsky⁹ it is not surprising that some repetition would occur. Still, it is annoying that the chapter on fascism, to take the most obvious instance, should repeat almost word for word what Mandel wrote in 1969 in his introduction to the Pathfinder edition of Trotsky's *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, as well as in his 1979 book on Trotsky.

These observations should not detract from the political significance and overall accomplishment of the book. Few individuals in the revolutionary movement, to say nothing of the academic community, could have produced a volume like the present one. As Mandel's final work, *Trotsky as Alternative* constitutes his own "will and testament," both a study of Trotsky's political and social thought and an implicit defense of his own lifelong political convictions. Not a rehabilitation of Trotsky — that is hardly necessary today — this book is more of a "reframing," to show that Trotsky's interpretations and development of Marxism are not merely of historical interest, but are relevant and necessary for revolutionary strategy today on a world scale. Despite some shortcomings, Mandel has here succeeded in his task. This work is a fitting conclusion to a life lived in devotion to the Fourth International and the emancipation of the workers of the world. □

Remembering Ernest Mandel

Continued from page 20

But we felt compelled to urge him, nonetheless, to rest more, to tour less, to conserve his energies. Although he did cut back his activities significantly, it was not possible for him to stop reaching out.

Ernest Mandel is our dear and valued comrade who will be greatly missed by our world movement and by many of us personally. He continues to live in all of us who are committed to the struggle for human liberation from all forms of oppression and degradation, in

those of us committed to the cause of the working class, in those of us who believe in and struggle for a socialist future, and in those of us who continue to make revolutionary Marxism a living reality. □

5. Ibid., pp. 41 and 47.

6. Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1979), p. 112.

7. Mandel, op. cit., pp. 47 and 71.

8. Ernest Germain, *Marxism vs. Ultraleftism* (published by the Fourth International in 1967), chapter 9. This pamphlet was reprinted by the Socialist Workers Party in a larger collection with the same title as part of an Education for Socialists bulletin in 1974. "Germain" is the best known of Mandel's public pen names. He also published articles under the name "Pierre Gousset" (see *Intercontinental Press*, March 27, 1972, p. 328).

9. Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky: A Study in the Dynamic of His Thought* (London: New Left Books, 1979).

“International Viewpoint” on FI World Congress

The following article and sidebar appeared on the inside front cover of the July 1995 issue of *International Viewpoint*, monthly English-language publication of the Fourth International. British-type spelling and punctuation have been changed for consistency with *BIDOM* editorial style.

The congress had four major debates. The first was a general discussion on the global situation organized around three themes — globalization and the crisis of capitalism, the major political tendencies of the current period, and the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe. The second debate represented an evaluation of the current situation and the perspectives in Latin America, with special attention to the evolution of the Castroist regime in Cuba. The third debate covered the general tendencies of the socio-political situation in Western Europe, with special attention on the state of the left and the response to the European Union. The fourth and final debate concerned the strategies and problems of construction of revolutionary parties and an International in the new global period.

Specific discussions, working group meetings, and commissions covered feminist activities, youth work, ecology, solidarity campaigns with Bosnia and Chiapas (Mexico), and the campaign to abolish Third World debt. The congress also examined and decided on a number of organizational problems concerning the status of various groups in various countries. The congress also noted the division of the forces of the International in Germany and Mexico, and looked for ways to organize cooperation between the parties concerned.

The collapse of Stalinism and the continuing capitalist crisis (corresponding to the extension of the long wave of crisis which began in the 1970s) have had contradictory effects. Myths and illusions connected to the restoration of capitalism in the post-Stalinist societies have dissipated, faced with the actually existing market economy. But reactions to the socio-economic crisis, in this period of loss of credibility of the socialist project, all too often take the form of reactionary tendencies of an ethnic, nationalist, racial, or religious character. Hence the urgent need to rebuild a worldwide movement of anticapitalist struggle, within the socialist perspective, taking account of the

Participants, Delegates, Guests, and Greetings

The 150 participants included representatives of organizations and groups linked to the International in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada/Québec, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Senegal, South Africa, the Spanish state, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, and the USA.

Organizations and groups in Algeria, Bolivia, Chile, Congo, Guadeloupe, Israeli state, Jordan, Martinique, and Mauritius could not attend, many for financial reasons, others for visa problems.

Guests included representatives of the Democratic Socialist Party of Australia, Gauches Unis (United Lefts) and the Tri-Continental Centre (both from Belgium), the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), Solidarity (USA), Zutik (Basque country), Lutte Ouvrière (France), People's Communist Party, MLCB, and Bisig (all of the Philippines), Russian Party of Labor, Communist Refoundation (Italy), and the African Party for Democracy and Socialism (PADS, Senegal).

[The] Congress also received a number of written greetings, including that of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) branch in the occupied territories.

recomposition of the workers movement which is under way as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.

The political disarray in the ranks of the anticapitalist left, in the context of a global balance of forces dominated by imperialism, has resulted in many political, even ideological capitulations. But it has also led to a spectacular overcoming of the sectarian traditions generated by the existence of Stalinism, which have taken root in the anticapitalist left over the decades. Regroupments of forces determined to learn the lessons of the historical abomination that was Stalinism and to continue, against the winds and the tides, to fight against capitalism are being realized in a number of countries so large that it is legitimate to extrapolate a general tendency in the new period.

This process can take a variety of forms. In some cases there are wide regroupings of anticapitalist forces where the major element comes mainly, but not exclusively from the decompo-

sition of Stalinism. In other cases there are narrower regroupments of tendencies which are based in the mutation under way inside the revolutionary left. Sometimes this takes the form of the creation of new political formations organized on the basis of democratic pluralism, respecting the diversity of the component parts and their individual identities, yet founded on the basis of unified action and collective discipline, and acting both on the electoral level and in the field of general social and political struggles.

In all the countries where one or the other of these possibilities exist, the organizations of the Fourth International are ready to be part of the regroupment process. We consider this an important step toward the recomposition of the anticapitalist left on a world scale. At the international level, the Fourth International is an active participant in regroupment, bringing with it the advantages of a long tradition of combat against capitalism and Stalinism. □

Opposition Emerges at FI World Congress

by Barry Weisleder

The author was an observer at the 14th World Congress of the Fourth International (FI), representing Socialist Action, an organization in solidarity with the FI in the Canadian state.

Readers of the July issue of *International Viewpoint* (IV) were presented with a rather one-sided and incomplete picture of the deliberations of the 14th World Congress of the FI, which was held in Belgium in early June.

The fact that the Congress left many key political issues unresolved was omitted by IV — plus the fact that significant opposition to the majority position was present at that important gathering of the world Trotskyist movement.

For the roughly 150 delegates and observers from more than 35 countries who attended (financial difficulties or travel restrictions preventing another nine FI groups from being present), it was a rather somber assembly.

Socialist Action (Canada) Recognized by FI

The FI World Congress examined and dealt with a number of organizational issues, including the status of pro-FI groups in a number of countries.

In the Canadian state the FI section was split in February 1994 when the Central Committee of Socialist Challenge/Gauche socialiste (SC/Gs) bureaucratically expelled the leaders of a former minority tendency. The tendency fought to make the section democratic centralist, including the establishment of common membership norms and common bi-national political campaigns.

The expelled members regrouped with their supporters to form Socialist Action, which publishes a newspaper of the same name and is politically active in seven cities across the Canadian state. Socialist Action of Canada [not to be confused with the U.S. organization of the same name] asked the FI World Congress to overturn the expulsions

and restore the democratic rights of those expelled.

A special "Canada Commission" was constituted at the World Congress to investigate all issues in dispute. After two lengthy hearings, and many consultations, the Commission unanimously concluded not to "tak[e] a position on the disciplinary measures taken..." by SC/Gs, owing to the "extremely complicated set of facts and circumstances involved."

Instead the Commission noted that Socialist Action/Canada is "an organization of F.I. partisans in the pan-Canadian state," and it recommended that the leading bodies of the FI "maintain appropriate contact and collaboration with Socialist Action/Canada."

The agreement of SC/Gs to this proposal was also noted.

The World Congress voted unanimously to accept the report and recommendations of the Canada Commission.

Doubts, fueled by difficult times for the left internationally, compounded by organizational and political disarray, predominated in the majority leadership current.

Though still head and shoulders above the variety of international sects claiming to be the Trotskyist movement, the Fourth International is nonetheless troubled by a real weakness of central leadership and by important contradictions in the program and strategy of that leadership.

No Vote on Key Differences

The Congress agenda consisted of four major points: the World Political Situation (including the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe); Latin America; Western Europe; and Building the Fourth International.

The outgoing majority leadership withdrew, without a vote, the reports and resolutions it had presented on the world situation and on the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe. These reports and resolutions, and various amendments, were referred for further discussion and rewrite to the next meeting of the FI's International Executive Committee (IEC), which was elected at the end of this World Congress.

Ironically, in the debate on the world resolution there appeared to be no major dispute on the main features of the economic situation: global crisis, not stability; the capitalist rulers' drive to lower wages and social benefits in their effort to offset the long-term and continuing decline in the rate of profit; the emergence of geopolitical protectionist trading blocs seeking the competitive edge and market control for one group of capitalist countries over the others; and the fact that globalization equals the impoverishment of four-fifths of the world's peoples.

Differences centered on the political question of the relationship of class forces around the world, and the conclusions to be drawn from one's assessment of the balance of class forces.

The FI majority interprets the low level of strike activity as a sign of working class defeat, rather than as mainly a consequence of bureaucratic misleadership (or more generally, a crisis of working class leadership). They see the absence of a working class political revolution (so far) in the bureaucratized workers states of "the East" as signalling the virtual inevitability of capitalist restoration in Russia, China, and elsewhere. Earlier they had pinned their hopes on the notion that one wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy (for a time, the government of Mikhail Gorbachev) would lead the political revolution for socialist democracy — and when that didn't happen, they became pessimistic about the prospects for a genuine political revolution led by the workers.

Instead of highlighting the struggles of nationally oppressed peoples, for example, in the ex-USSR and ex-Yugoslavia, the FI majority has tended to portray these struggles as reactionary. Today still, they take no clear, albeit critical, position in support of the governments and peoples resisting Serb expansionism, and fail to demand the removal of United Nations forces acting as surrogates for the Western capitalist powers, who actually would prefer to see Bosnia carved up and parts of it annexed to a Greater Serbia.

Due to their wrong assessment of Stalinism (that it is in part revolutionary), the FI majority looks to the old Stalinist parties around the world (including ex-Maoist ones) for splits and regroupments with which to rebuild the world revolutionary movement. This false orientation

has had disastrous results for FI sections in Spain, Germany, and elsewhere.

Class Independence at Stake

The appetite for regroupment with nonrevolutionary forces has also inclined the majority to downplay, to question, or to remove elements of the FI's program that might be obstacles to such regroupments. Not just the fight for political revolution in the bureaucratized workers states but the concept of permanent revolution (as explained by Leon Trotsky), the strategy of the united front, and the principle of working class political independence have been subordinated, especially as applied to Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Support for bourgeois presidential candidates, like Corazon Aquino in the Philippines and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in Mexico, and support in South Africa for the bourgeois electoral alliance (now the governing coalition) between the former ruling National Party and the African National Congress — these are evidence of a slide away from the Marxist policy of working class independence.

At the World Congress the Irish section of the FI took the majority leaders to task for the latter's implicit support for the so-called Irish Peace Accord by which the nationalist Irish Republican Army (IRA) has ended its armed struggle against continuing British occupation and the partition of Ireland, north and south.

But to no avail. The FI majority leadership texts on Latin America, Europe, and Building the FI were adopted by vote, incorporating a dim view of prospects for independent working class struggle and for building parties based on a revolutionary program.

Opposition Caucus Formed

In opposition to the dim view perspective, FI groupings in France, Britain, India, the United States, and Poland presented five political counter-resolutions for debate. They formed a Caucus, which became known as the "Draft Call" Caucus, based on a common analysis on the following points:

- an analysis of the policy of capitalist restoration — that it is led by the Stalinist bureaucracies;
- an evaluation of the world political situation — that it is marked by imperialist decline and the fall of Stalinism, that we are still in the epoch of wars and revolutions, favorable to the building of a revolutionary International;
- an orientation of building the FI in all countries on the basis of our fundamental program; the necessity of an independent working class orientation and united front policy for building our sections.

During the World Congress, five additional FI sections and groups joined the Draft Call Caucus. In other words, the opposition platform enjoyed the active support of nearly one-third of the Congress, the most significant opposition current in the FI since the late 1970s.

A number of other FI sections also expressed agreement with important aspects of the Draft

Call. Although they didn't join the Caucus or vote for its counter-reports, they voted against some majority texts and abstained on others.

Fruitless Efforts

Sections in Sweden, Denmark, the reconstituted FI group in Germany, a small tendency in the French section, plus an American delegate, presented amendments to the majority text on party building. They demanded an organized discussion on permanent revolution, the situation in the bureaucratized workers states, party building, and feminist perspectives (including a detailed review of national experiences in fusions and regroupments with non-Trotskyist groups), the national question, plus balance sheets on the Nicaraguan revolution and the 1994 Mexican election.

These amendments were defeated.

Veteran leader of the FI, Ernest Mandel (who died on July 20), proposed an amendment too. After berating the "pessimists who lack confidence" in the working class and the future, Mandel sought to include in the majority party building text an affirmation of "international democratic centralism." That is, on questions of war, revolution, and counterrevolution, the FI should carry out a common line and action.

The majority current rejected his proposal too. (Mandel had more success in fighting to preserve FI publications, like *IV*, beset in recent years by rising costs and declining political commitment by the FI leadership.)

The Majority Spectrum

And so the World Congress trundled to a rather inconclusive adjournment. True, the gathering endorsed campaigns to lift the blockade against Cuba, to cancel the debt of super-exploited countries to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and to hold a counter-conference to the European Union Conference in 1996. Important initiatives all.

But left unresolved were major issues, like whether socialism is still on the world agenda, or whether the left must limit itself to the fight for democratic rights in a unipolar world of neo-liberal "free market" tyranny.

The FI majority held sway, not so much by winning a majority of delegates to a definite line as by portraying the minority caucus as doctrinaire. Thus, those who voted for the resolutions and reports of the outgoing leadership spanned a very wide range of (in my opinion, incompatible) views.

Supporters of the majority text on building the FI included Mexican delegates (from both public factions of the split PRT — Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, the Mexican section) who propose to dissolve their groups into a future pro-Zapatista party and who urge the FI to change its name and to function simply as a workers information network. It also included leaders of sections in Portugal, Denmark, and Sweden who reject "regroupment" with nonrevolutionary groups as the principal tactic for advancement today.

It included members of the U.S. group Solidarity, non-Leninist and politically heterogeneous by design, as well as members of the Brazilian section, which operates as a Leninist-Trotskyist open tendency, with its own newspaper, within the mass Workers Party (PT) of Brazil.

It included both proponents and opponents of united front tactics toward mass labor parties and social democratic parties; both those who said social democracy is dead and those who said it is on the rebound — given the absence of a mass working class alternative.

It included a Czech delegate, whose group had collapsed while trying to "regroup" with larger "left currents," which then dissipated. (Notably, there was no discussion or balance sheet on the failure of the FI thus far to build any organization in Russia or Eastern Europe — except of course for the one in Poland, whose delegates upported the Draft Call Caucus.)

An inconclusive debate, attended by very strange voting combinations, is hardly a prescription for a clear, much less a durable political perspective. The crisis in the global radical left will, it appears, continue to be reflected inside the Fourth International.

But the fact that an organized, coherent, and significant Trotskyist opposition is now present ensures that the fight to defend and further develop the historic program of the Fourth International is far from over. □

Fourth International Holds World Congress

by Steve Bloom

At the World Congress of the Fourth International (FI), which took place in Belgium on June 5–10 of this year, four main political points were on the agenda: "World Situation" (which included a discussion about Eastern Europe and the USSR), "Latin America," "Europe," and "Building the FI." These discussions were prepared by written documents in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin (IIDB) and by oral reports at the congress itself. The delegates approved resolutions on each of them. In addition there were solidarity workshops dealing with various parts of the world, including Bosnia, Chiapas, and the former USSR.

Situation in the FI Today

The last decade or so has seen many left currents plunged into crisis, or even disappear from the scene — both in individual countries and on a world scale. It is a strong tribute to the FI and its sections, therefore, that they continue to maintain a remarkable level of activity and international collaboration. In many ways it was a significant achievement that this world congress could take place at all. Nevertheless, the

objective difficulties facing revolutionaries today made themselves felt. Of the three FI congresses that this writer has attended, 1995 was by far the smallest. The credentials report indicated that almost every national organization has declined in membership between the last world congress (1991) and today.

One country which illustrates the extremely volatile situation is Mexico, where the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT) was for years the FI's flagship section. In 1991 it had by far the largest single world congress delegation. But leading up to the 1994 elections in Mexico the PRT suffered a debilitating split. Though both wings of the party have maintained their ties with the International, their combined membership has shrunk dramatically and our movement in Mexico suffers from a severe crisis of perspective.

The FI itself faces acute financial and organizational difficulties. Since 1991 there have been drastic reductions in the international staff and in other aspects of day-to-day functioning. A number of publications were eliminated, while others have been cut back from a bi-weekly to a monthly schedule. Even so, there is

not sufficient income to maintain things at their present level for long.

The situation is not all negative by any means. There have also been important gains for the FI since the last world congress. Perhaps most notable was the admission of the Nava Sama Samaja Party of Sri Lanka — an organization with real mass influence — as a section. Of particular interest to readers of *BIDOM* will be the decision by a Puerto Rican group, the Taller Formación Política, to join the International.

The 1995 congress certainly suffered from the cutbacks in the FI. The necessary preparatory discussions were far from adequate. With the sole exception of the document on "Building the FI" (which has been discussed in various forms over a period of years) most of the majority resolutions were not even published in the IIDB until a few months, or even weeks before the delegates gathered. As a result, none of the national sections was able to organize a serious discussion about the issues raised in them.

"Building the FI"

In part because it was the best prepared, and in part because of its central importance for all the work the FI is doing today, the debate on "Building the FI" was of key interest. During this discussion the delegates tried to come to grips with a number of problems flowing from recent changes in the international situation — especially since the end of the Cold War. These factors include:

1. The founding documents and traditional body of programmatic writings of the FI were based on a world reality that is far different from what exists today. During the 1930s and '40s, and to some extent even through the 1970s and '80s, socialist revolution was a far more immediate prospect — in different kinds of countries and in different parts of the world — than seems to be the case in the 1990s.
2. For decades after World War II, the FI (like every other political current in the world) based its outlook on the existence of rival world powers and the reality of the Cold War. This phase of world history has clearly come to an end.
3. The recent massive capitalist restructuring and economic globalization has had a profound impact in every country, as well as on world politics as a whole.
4. All these changes, in turn, affect the workers movement. Communist parties have fractured. Social Democratic organizations have moved further and further to the right, confirming their role as little more than props for the present system. Revolutionary groups in the Third World have found it harder and harder to defend a program for radical social change — given the harsh reality of inevitable imperialist intervention when there is no obvious alternative pole of support which they can count on.

The majority resolution adopted by the FI congress tries to deal with these and similar factors. It asserts that they create, at one and the same time, both a severe challenge and a real opportunity for our world movement. The situation we face is one where we can no longer (if we ever could) simply rely on old programmatic formulas to resolve the new problems facing working people on a world scale. Without an effort to renew and redefine our program in the context of this new world reality the FI will inevitably condemn itself to irrelevance.

At the same time the big changes in the world remove some of the obstacles that have existed, since the degeneration of the Russian revolution, to the development of a truly mass revolutionary international on a world scale. The old reformist milieus have been dramatically

shaken up. Individuals, and even organized currents, from other traditions in the workers and radical movement are seriously rethinking past positions. This could lay the basis for a convergence between such forces and the FI on some of the essential issues of the class struggle and of revolutionary ideology.

The resolution cited the following major points as key in any such process: the fight for immediate and transitional demands; the need for a clear and decisive break with capitalism; for socialist democracy and political pluralism in society, in the mass movement, and in the revolutionary party; for the self-organization of working people and the oppressed; against bureaucracy; for women's liberation and national liberation; support for the environment; internationalism.

National Regroupment Efforts and Other Disputes

While everyone agrees that there is no prospect for a "new international" broader than the FI at the present time, there are real possibilities for regroupments with other forces in individual countries. A variety of concrete experiences have taken place. It is, in fact, a severe weakness that the FI has not, up to now, made much of an effort to draw balance sheets on the outcome of these regroupment efforts.

Nevertheless, there seems to be agreement that at least some of them are positive (the work of our comrades in "Communist Refoundation" in Italy for example) while others have definitely had a negative impact (the attempted fusion in the Spanish state between the FI section and a former Maoist group). In other countries — Germany (United Socialist Party, or VSP), the U.S. (Solidarity), etc. — different groups of comrades have developed counterposed perspectives and draw quite different balance sheets (or are not yet ready to draw any balance sheet at all).

In addition to the disagreements about national regroupment efforts, broader differences were expressed at the congress (even within the majority current) about the proper balance to strike between various aspects of the new reality. The author of this article was among those delegates who questioned whether the overall majority is giving adequate weight in its analysis to the specific programmatic perspectives of the FI (in the context of regroupments or potential regroupments with other forces) and to the essential continuity that must be maintained with our historical theory and ideology (which is necessary for any effective programmatic redefinition).

There was a small minority at the congress, among them the delegation from Socialist Action in the U.S., which opposed the entire frame-

work of the majority resolutions. Their stated view is that the perspectives of the majority deviate too far from the traditional program of the FI, essentially abandoning a Trotskyist outlook.

One positive development, in the context of trying to resolve all of these issues, was a decision by the congress to work toward setting up commissions, under the direction of the incoming international leadership, which can begin to prepare discussions on some of the programmatic questions that have been raised repeatedly during recent debates in the FI. These include: Third World revolution and permanent revolution; events in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China; organizational tasks today and the applicability of Leninist principles; the national question; revolution and counterrevolution in Nicaragua.

A wide disparity of assessments on such issues was presented by different comrades during the congress debates and, clearly, there was no hope of gaining a satisfactory understanding during the brief discussion time available there. If the FI is to successfully undertake the programmatic renewal which most delegates agree is needed, following through on the kind of work outlined for these commissions will need to be a priority task for the new FI leadership.

Another initiative that promises to be important was a decision by the congress to produce an internal information bulletin which can begin to report regularly on the work of individual sections, or on particular discussions within the international leadership (for example, on events in Mexico or regroupment experiences in individual countries).

No Change of Position on Cuba

As part of the Latin America point there was a special discussion on Cuba. It was scheduled because a very small minority — made up of comrades from an opposition grouping in the French section (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, or LCR) — was calling on the FI to revise its traditional view and issue a call for "political revolution" in Cuba. They got no support from any other delegates, however.

The viewpoint which was approved by the congress states that any call to overthrow Castro at this time would only provide assistance to the counterrevolutionary forces in Miami. While it is essential to advocate a broad democratization of the revolution, the proposal for U.S.-style "free elections" is a patent fraud. No free elections can take place in Cuba as long as the blockade remains in place, and as long as Washington is able to back its own hand-picked candidates with millions of dollars, as it did in Nicaragua. □

Report on the FI World Congress

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The following report on the 14th World Congress is based on my observations of the first three of the congress's six days and on documents relating to the congress. I was present only for the reports and discussions on the World Economic and Political Reports, the Latin America Report, and an evening workshop on Bosnia. Unfortunately, I had to leave early for job-related reasons.

Aside from observing the congress, I hoped to promote *BIDOM* and publicize the Committee to Study Leon Trotsky's Legacy. When the congress opened I counted 83 people seated in the auditorium, 17 of them women. This seemed about half the size (maybe less) of the last World Congress (1991); at both congresses, some of those attending were guests.

Difficulties Facing FI

The decline in numbers since the last World Congress reflected not only the losses of cadre from the type of "regroupment" the majority of the current leadership has been promoting, causing the liquidation and/or fragmentation of sections in some countries. Also, the capitalist offensive worldwide has sapped local funds, making it impossible for some comrades to afford to attend. Thus, representation from Latin America, Africa, and Asia was a small fraction of what it had been at the last congress.

I will highlight some political issues that being at the congress brought to my attention. These demonstrate the scope of the problems facing the FI and describe some hopeful developments.

The Congress Proceedings

The congress opened with reports on the World Economic Situation and the World Political Situation. These reports deserve discussion.

The majority's World Economic Situation report documented the crisis of capitalism and the measures capital has adopted to continue to maximize profits. While it contained considerable data, the report was more like a market report than a Marxist report; it did not explain the significance of developments in terms of the class struggle of workers around the world.

This economic report is of critical importance, in my opinion. After all, Marxism is a scientific study of political economy; economics forms the basis of Marxist politics. If the economic analysis is wrong, the politics can't be right either.

World Economic Situation

After this report has been published in final form I hope to return, in a future issue of *BI-*

DOM, to a more detailed discussion of the document.

For now, let me comment on one passage of particular concern politically — the assertion that "South Korea and Taiwan have followed their own trajectories, which have allowed them to escape from the category of dependent countries." If they are no longer "dependent," what are they? Are they now "independent" of the dominating role of the major imperialist powers?

Have they escaped from underdevelopment via the capitalist road? Obviously, South Korea and Taiwan are *not* stable bourgeois democracies. Although their economies have sectors using advanced technology in large industrial plants, aren't these manifestations of the "uneven and combined" nature of neo-colonial economic development in the imperialist epoch? After all, these sectors exist side by side with pre-industrial, nearly feudal conditions and economic relations on the land and in the villages, vast impoverishment for the landless majority, and decades of thoroughgoing political repression.

Moreover, South Korea and Taiwan have hardly "escaped from dependency." They are both heavily dependent on U.S. capital and its military/police institutions to defend investments and property relations.

If they are to be considered independent of imperialist domination, as the majority document seems to suggest, does that not call into question the theory of permanent revolution? Does that not bring back onto the agenda discussion of the two-stage theory?¹ If South Korea can "escape from dependency" within the framework of world imperialism, wouldn't that apply to South Africa, which also has considerable heavy industry?

World Political Situation

The World Political Situation report by the majority, since it flowed from the economic report above, could not, in my opinion, provide adequate political direction. It emphasized the need for "programmatic redefinition" and listed the new problems requiring this. While the need to formulate transitional demands was raised, the importance of this task was blunted as a need "for the 21st century."

The document and the oral report based on it reflected what to me seems a loss of political footing. They offered no answers, but only raised questions that I believe have already been answered by our movement. They seem to ignore the basic theoretical acquisitions of the

Marxist movement over the past 150 years of struggle.

Ex-USSR and Eastern Europe

There were separate reports and a discussion on the former USSR and Eastern Europe as part of the first agenda point, the World Situation. The reporter for the majority sought to explain the nature of the crisis in the ex-USSR and why there had been no political revolution there. She rightly attributed this to such factors as the imperialist offensive, the creation of competition among workers, the complicity of the former Communist Party rulers with the austerity policies of the International Monetary Fund, the invasion of goods from abroad, the bloc between factory directors and union leaders, and the lack of a global alternative. She asserted that the present regime remains a hybrid one, as it had been under Communist Party rule, and that capitalism has not yet been restored.

For all her expertise and her obvious willingness to examine matters from many angles, her discussion tended to remain in the realm of abstractions. It did not draw any lessons from the many struggles since the imposition of the market reforms or raise ways revolutionaries might intervene. Her report was not linked with the practical work of organizing. This is dramatized by the concluding sentence of her written document; "We need to articulate plan, market and democracy (social control) on a scale that must be more and more immediately worldwide." I have no idea what that means.

On the armed conflicts and the national question in the former USSR and the former Yugoslavia, she made several important points: she asserted that we certainly support the right of national self-determination, but that it must be combined with social issues; in Bosnia, we should be for "the right to live together." As in her remarks on the national question in the former USSR, in her discussion on the former Yugoslavia, her support for the national struggles was surrounded by "ifs" and "buts"; she did not treat these struggles of the oppressed nationalities as constituting a vital part of the unfolding process of political revolution but as a regrettable *fait accompli*. Thus her claims of support sounded tepid instead of categorical.

In the case of Bosnia, for example, she maintained that the Bosnians chose independence only because they were fearful of being dominated by the Serbs, that they *really* would prefer to be part of a federation. But where does this logic take us? Of course, it was precisely *because* of the policies and propaganda of the Serbian chauvinist leadership in Belgrade under

1. The "two-stage theory" argues that, as a first stage, there must be a bourgeois-democratic revolution, to "modernize" society while remaining within the limits of capitalism, and only at a later stage can the working class and its allies aim at making a socialist revolution. See Trotsky's book *Permanent Revolution* for a full discussion. — *Eds.*

Milosevic that Bosnians feared remaining inside the federation and sought independence. This independence is vitally necessary right now in order for workers in Bosnia to resolve their political and economic problems. The question is, How can independence be realized? It can only be under working class rule. This takes us back to the workers and to political developments in their milieu. [For more on ex-Yugoslavia, see the articles by George Saunders and Marilyn Vogt-Downey elsewhere in this issue. — Eds.]

“Charting a Road Forward”

The three majority reports were followed by a sympathizing participant from the U.S. (Fourth International Caucus/Solidarity), who presented extended remarks in defense of a document called “Charting a Road Forward,” which he had cosigned with a Swedish, a Danish, and two British comrades. This document, dedicated to “renewing old truths” of Trotskyism, was the product of a commission established after the March 1995 meeting of the FI’s International Executive Committee [IEC]. The commission had not had an opportunity to effectively collaborate, he reported. Their text was therefore still “preliminary.”

This was not a counter-report to the majority’s World Political Situation report but rather an effort to pull some of the majority supporters toward “traditional ideas” and “principles.” With reference to “changing realities” in the new world order since the collapse of the USSR and the “restructuring” of world capitalism, this reporter spoke of the need for new programmatic ideas. But these must be developed, he said, resting on “traditional ideas” as “an indispensable foundation.” However, just which “traditional ideas” or “essential historic truths” he had in mind were not explained.

The Minority View

The opposition position was presented in the form of a counterreport based on the “World Political Resolution” of the U.S. organization Socialist Action (SA). That was supplemented by a counterreport on the former USSR and Eastern Europe by a delegate from Poland.

The reporter for the minority on the world political situation (from SA/USA) disputed what he saw as unwarranted pessimism on the part of the majority, which he said fueled their political retreat. He asserted that there were many struggles going on and opportunities for the growth of revolutionary currents. To take advantage of this, the FI needs to build cadre organizations in as many countries as possible, based on the founding program of the FI, working to advance the struggles of workers and their allies on the basis of transitional demands and building support through united fronts. Obviously, the founding program may need updating in light of the changing situation, he said, but the method of that program is still indispensable

for revolutionary organizing. (The minority resolution was printed in the June 1995 issue of the newspaper *Socialist Action*, available from 3425 Cesar Chavez St. [Army Street], San Francisco CA 94110.)²

The minority reporter on the situation in the former USSR and Eastern Europe asserted that it was not Stalinism that had collapsed but illusions about Stalinism, e.g., the illusion that it still has a dual nature, a progressive side. The main obstacle to workers mobilizing has been the confusion caused by the legacy of Stalinist (and bourgeois) lies that Stalinism equals socialism. The recomposition of the workers movement can only take place on a class basis and with a genuine socialist program. We can explain that the transformations in the former USSR and Eastern Europe are chiefly the consequences of the false Stalinist policy of trying to build socialism in one country (or one bloc) — disregarding the continuing economic pressure of world capitalism, the long-term isolation of the workers states, the lack of support from abroad because no workers revolutions were made in the advanced industrialized countries.

He concluded by saying that to help organize to resist privatization and market reforms and rebuild the movements through which workers can take power in their own name, the FI needs to focus on building cadre organizations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The key differences between the majority and minority reporters on this issue reflected the differences overall: the majority’s pessimism leads it to take the building of cadre organizations off the agenda.

Majority and Minority

The most important development at the congress, as I see it, was the growing cohesion and strength of the opposition to the majority’s policies, particularly in regard to “regroupment” — i.e., dissolving organizations with an explicitly Trotskyist identity into other organizations having no such clear identity and program. This was reflected in a “Draft Call” on the eve of the congress defining the basis for unity of comrades from France, the U.S., Britain, India, Poland, and Canada. Because the various minority currents were able to coalesce, they were able to coordinate their interventions in the discussion and interject vital political issues in a clear, organized way to the benefit of all.

In response to this growing opposition, the majority hesitated. The reporter for the majority’s world political situation report announced he was calling for “no vote” on his own report and proposed that the documents and reports on this agenda point, including the text “Charting a Road Forward,” be referred for further discussion and action to the next IEC meeting.

Latin America Report

The report on Latin America was based on a written document, which says in part:

Between 1991 and today our presence as a current became weaker in Latin America. As a result of the crisis mentioned above and of our own failings, we ceased to exist in several countries. This has not been compensated [for] with the affiliation of those groups and organizations which in the same period joined the International. The problem demands our attention so that we may create the conditions for solving it in the coming years. Our stronger social implantation in those countries where we retain organizations must be the basis for taking on that challenge, conscious that new dilemmas, forms of struggle, and social actors have made their appearance, that the possibility of experiencing processes leading to radical breaks are still present and that we are but one part of the revolutionary left that exists in the region.

The document repeatedly uses such terms as “radical break” or “take over the government” when referring to what the FI comrades are working toward. These unscientific terms may be intended as euphemisms for revolution, but they are confusing. Making a “radical break” or even “taking over the government” is not the same as carrying out a socialist revolution. To imply that they are is to ignore all the lessons of Lenin’s *State and Revolution* and the confirmation of those lessons in our century.

What class can actually guarantee democratic rights to the workers and peasants in Latin America or any neo-colonial country? Trotsky in his theory of permanent revolution and the Russian revolution of October 1917 long ago answered these questions. It can only be the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Latin America report did not reflect awareness of these lessons. Instead the democratic solution is expected to come from an ill-defined “popular and democratic alternative.”

The document focuses on disappointments with “the left” or “the revolutionary left.” This “left” is losing strength, the document says, but it does not make explicit who this “left” is. One strongly suspects that it is predominantly the “traditional left,” i.e. former CPs and their milieu, left Social Democrats, former Maoists, and other “populists” and “progressives,” in whom the majority has misplaced illusions.

The discussion did not revolve around the political developments in the workers movements, of which there have been many. The reporter did not stress the need to build revolutionary cadre organizations, consciously intervening with a plan of how to win. This reflects a lack of awareness of Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done?* The reporter seemed to look to forces like the FMLN, the FSLN, the Zapatistas, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas of the Mexican PRD, the Sao Paulo Forum participants, etc., to precipitate the “radical break” that is desired.

Defense of the Cuban Revolution

A separate report was presented on Cuba, in which the reporter stated that the biggest mistake in Cuba’s reform process has been that it

2. Note: Because of reactionary legislation in the U.S., groups or individuals in this country have only sympathizing status, not formal membership in the FI. But U.S. Trotskyists have always been an important influence in the Fourth International through the strength of their political ideas and organizational example. (This dates back to the years of Trotsky’s close collaboration with the leaders of the American Trotskyist movement, especially his years in Mexico, 1937–40.) — Eds.

included no political reforms. She said that the FI needed to step up its work on campaigns to end the U.S. economic blockade. However, she also declared that it is wrong to raise the demand for bourgeois parliamentary-type elections before the blockade is lifted, because Cuba is really virtually at war and such elections would only be used by the U.S. imperialists and their allies, who are poised to take advantage of any political openings in Cuba.

The reporter for the minority on the situation in Latin America (from SA/USA) blamed the majority's "regroupment" policy and loss of class criteria for a number of developments that he saw as errors: the Peruvian comrades had entered the nonrevolutionary "United Left," the Uruguayan comrades had joined a popular front formation (subordinated to capitalist politics), and both remnants of the PRT in Mexico supported the bourgeois politician Cardenas. He charged that the majority supporters no longer understood the concept of a "united front" and what it was for. This led them into undifferentiated political coalitions with reformist forces subordinated to the politics of the capitalist bosses. The majority's view that Nicaragua under the Sandinistas had been a workers state was also challenged.

BIDOM's Readership and the Trotsky Committee

Regarding *BIDOM*, it has a committed readership internationally. Comrades from South Africa, India, Belgium, Britain, Germany, and elsewhere looked eagerly at our May-June issue (featuring Ernest Mandel on "World Socialist Revolution Today" and containing my critique of the FI's 1992 manifesto). Many indicated that they value seeing *BIDOM* each month. It is not only that they are interested in the information and analyses that *BIDOM* contains but that what happens in the U.S. is critical to the cause of socialism throughout the world.

As for the effort to promote the work of the Committee to Study Leon Trotsky's Legacy, a workshop was held to present materials and information about the committee. At least 20 comrades attended and showed considerable interest in the committee's work. A number of comrades have academic and other contacts who can help the Trotsky Committee; others know of Trotskyists who are very old (as in Poland) and have a wealth of information to share for the first time from their long years of struggle and resistance to imperialism, Stalinism, and the Nazis, including in the War-

saw ghetto uprising and subsequently in Siberian camps.

At this workshop, Aleksandr Buzgalin, the only Russian who attended the world congress, also reported on his work in Russia. He is an economics professor, humanitarian activist, and proponent of worker self-management who understands how vital international collaboration is. He has assisted in the publication of the FI's journal *International Viewpoint* in Russian, the journal *Alternatives*, and the translation into Russian and publication of the FI's 1992 manifesto *Socialism or Barbarism*. He also helped organize the conference on Trotsky in Moscow in November 1994.

Knowledge about Trotsky and his ideas varied widely among the Fourth Internationalists I met. For example, a Greek comrade is deeply involved in studying Trotsky's works and translating into Greek articles by Trotsky on the dialectic for a collection to which he is writing an introduction. Another comrade from Europe has been in the Trotskyist movement for many years but has hardly read Trotsky.

Meeting all these comrades and talking with them was truly a privilege. □

Notes on the 14th World Congress

by Keith Mann

The purpose of this brief article is not to give an overall detailed report of the 14th World Congress. Rather, I would like to give a flavor of the congress, highlight what I think were some of the most important discussions and debates, and offer an overall assessment of what some of the challenges facing the International are today and to what degree the congress began to meet them.

The Fourth International today has much to be proud about. In spite of its small size, it is by far the largest, most extensive (in terms of international representation) revolutionary organization in the world today. Its program and cadre have survived a World War, fascist and Stalinist oppression, the Cold War, the collapse of the Stalinized workers states in the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and other severe tests. It remains actively committed to the defense of the poor and downtrodden of this planet and the fight for a democratic socialist world.

Yet it would be inaccurate and even dishonest to gloss over its weaknesses and shortcomings, which today are considerable. These problems, many of which were reflected at the 14th World Congress, some of which will be discussed below, are due to an unfavorable international political situation for revolutionary socialists as well as some of the weaknesses and errors of the FI's sections and leadership. Nobody in the sections or leadership of the Fourth Interna-

tional needs or wishes a self-congratulatory or falsely optimistic account of the International today. If this report seems to stress the weaknesses and problems of the International, it is not because they outweigh its strengths or achievements but rather because a critical assessment of its work is the most fruitful way to advance its goals.

One of the most noteworthy features of the congress was its small size. This wasn't a surprise. The organizers planned a gathering of modest proportions. While the strongest sections of the International, including the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), the Brazilian delegation, and the Sri Lanka section, were well represented, as well as smaller sections from both larger countries (the U.S.) and smaller ones (Ireland, Luxembourg, Hong Kong), delegations from several important countries were absent. For example, while a leading Basque comrade attended and played a positive role in the congress debates, no other comrade from the rest of the Spanish state attended. There were no representatives from several countries where FI groups exist. Since the last congress nearly all of the sections of the International have shrunk and some have disappeared. The international center too has been greatly reduced in size, limiting its ability to coordinate activity and disseminate information.

Unlike at previous congresses, there were very few invited guests from non-FI revolutionary or progressive organizations. Notable exceptions included the three-person delegation from the Philippine Communist Party; Landing Savane, the leader of the Senegalese PADS (African Party of Democratic Socialism) — Savane is an MP and leading critic of the regime there who warmly thanked the FI for its energetic campaign in his behalf, which he believed was instrumental in forcing the government to release him from prison last year; and Russian Marxist Aleksandr Buzgalin, who has worked closely with the FI over the last several years.

The congress itself was well organized, though the preparations for it were not. The congress was postponed at least once, and most of the documents were assembled and distributed only weeks before the gathering actually took place in early June of this year.

As other reports have explained in detail, the congress's proceedings were organized around several topics which had been presented in written reports before the congress and introduced by oral reports to begin the discussions. Several of these reports stimulated lively discussions, often animated by sharp differences, but always by a serious approach by the speakers. I was particularly struck by one feature of these debates which I believe reflects the usefulness and vitality of the International today. No matter

how serious the differences were on a given topic, speakers nearly always seemed to really be addressing the arguments of one another. They were, so to speak, on the same wavelength. As anyone who has ever participated in the internal life of a far left organization knows, this is often not the case.

Likewise, although there is a majority and a minority in the International today, I did not find the atmosphere at the congress to be factional. I was favorably impressed by the fact that some delegates representing the minority did not feel obliged to paper over differences among themselves in the name of preserving the cohesion of their tendency at all costs and at the same time did not hesitate to support a majority position when they agreed with it. For example, the comrades of Socialist Action, one of the two sympathizing groups of the FI in the U.S., have wide agreement with Fourth Internationalists from the minority current in France and other countries on a number of questions. However, these comrades have widely differing appreciations among themselves of the Castro leadership in Cuba and the positions to take concerning socialist democracy in that country. The SA comrades openly disagreed with their French cothinkers and supported the majority resolution on Cuba. That is principled politics.

Unfortunately, however, the congress avoided ample discussion of some of the most important issues facing the International today. Foremost among these is the evolution of several Latin American sections. In Mexico, for example, the PRT, formerly one of the brightest stars of the International is divided in two and has lost the overwhelming number of its membership over the last several years. Worse yet, both groups have given various degrees of political support to the capitalist opposition politician Cardenas. Hopefully, this issue will receive the attention it deserves in the post-congress period.

One of the major sources of the differences in the International today flow from widely differing assessments of the global balance of forces between labor and capital. At the congress this was reflected in a recurring theme which helped structure the debates of nearly every agenda point, especially those on the World Political Situation, Europe, Latin America and Building the International. This took the form of a debate around the question, "where are the real 'cleavages' today?" While U.S. revolutionaries are not in the habit of posing political questions this way, delegates from both the minority and the majority offered remarkably consistent opinions on this question throughout the debates.

The international minority believes that the real cleavage in the class struggle and in working class and left parties and formations today is between reform and revolution. Delegates and reporters reflecting the views of the international majority see the cleavage today between those who accept the neo-liberal policies of imperialist financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, and those who don't.

This manner of posing questions struck me as a useful and accurate way of analyzing the world situation and determining the tasks facing revolutionaries today. This gave a certain unity to the debates.

But while this was generally positive it had a down side as well. Speakers intervening on the Latin American or World Political report often seemed to have the topic of Building the International in mind. This was positive in that it gave a certain activist edge to the discussions (something that was often missing in the reports themselves). At the same time, however, it led to a certain confusion between assessing what is and deciding what should be done. Party building tasks in any given country are not solely determined by the state of the economy or the workers movement in a given country.

It is quite clear that the cleavage today among left-wing political formations in much of the world is between those who accept neo-liberalism and those who reject it. For several years now, most European Social Democratic parties have accepted the neo-liberal framework. This has been the case in France, which is why the right now controls most political institutions in that country. It certainly describes the British Labour Party under its current leadership. Felipe Gonzalez, Social Democratic prime minister of Spain, for years has been a firm believer in neo-liberalism. The largest of the two political parties built out of the ruins of the Italian Communist Party, the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), envisions electoral alliances with the remains of the Italian Christian Democracy, and it invited not only right-wing demagogue and billionaire Silvio Berlusconi to its recent congress, but the neo-fascist Fini as well. In Latin America, not only have Social Democratic parties been won to positions of support of market capitalism, but so have many former armed revolutionary organizations, including sections of the FMLN and FSLN leadership!

The international majority is correct in stressing this as an obstacle to building a revolutionary movement. However, the near universal rightward drift of international Social Democracy and the "social-democratization" of many remaining Communist parties does not mean that the working class has suffered a decisive defeat. If the collapse of the Soviet Union has temporarily tipped the global balance of forces in favor of imperialism (allowing it a free hand to wage the war against Iraq), workers in many countries continue to strongly resist austerity drives and attacks against their organizations.

So if the cleavage between accepting and resisting neo-liberalism is a useful way of explaining most workers parties today, it is far less clear that this same cleavage applies to the tasks of building FI organizations. But even though in my opinion the classic cleavage between reform and revolution should remain a key factor in determining partners in eventual fusions, real life situations are often far more complicated. The precise nature of some political formations, such as Communist Refoundation in Italy, have not yet been decisively determined

in terms of reform and revolution. The presence of an organized revolutionary current can be instrumental in winning centrist elements to revolutionary politics. These considerations highlight the limits of the cleavage paradigm.

In my opinion two of the most important tasks facing the Fourth International today are drawing a balance sheet of recent party building efforts and organizing a far-reaching discussion throughout the ranks of our world movement that aims at analyzing our historical program in light of recent changes in the world political situation. The pre-congress period did little to advance either of these goals, although the congress itself made several modest but significant steps in this direction.

The last world congress was held only shortly after the momentous events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It was too early to elaborate full-blown assessments of the relationship of our program to the new world situation. Today, however, there is enough historical distance to begin to reconceptualize the world in the light of those changes. For example, one of the most powerful concepts of the Fourth International for decades was the concept of the dialectical interrelationship of the three sectors of the world revolution: the class struggle in the imperialist centers, the struggle for workers democracy and political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers states, and the struggle for national independence for the colonialized countries of the Third World. Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, initially elaborated in the Russian context and extended as a general theory of world revolution in 1929, helped Trotskyists in their analyses and solidarity efforts with this third sector.

The concept of the three sectors was particularly useful in the post-World War II period. Those years saw a series of sharp upsurges in the Third World as one colony after another proclaimed and fought for independence. This was also the period of the anti-Stalinist uprising in East Germany in June 1953 and in Hungary in 1956. The Prague Spring, the 1968 May-June events in France, the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-75, and the Cuban and Algerian revolutions demonstrated the validity of this theory.

But what about today? Can one still speak of three sectors of the world revolution in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet and East European regimes? Does Stalinism still exist? These are important questions for the Marxist movement today. Discussion and debate around these questions is as important as finding the "correct" answers. The experience of engaging in collective debate over these and other questions will give cohesion to our movement, help develop cadres, contribute to a reinforcement of the International's considerable theoretical and programmatic achievements, and ultimately help FI activists in their everyday political work.

There is, however, a broad range of sensibility as to the importance of initiating such discussions. Most of those present at the World Congress seemed to share these concerns to one degree or another, though there is also a great

variety of sentiment on actually organizing these discussions. A very serious discussion on the current state of the international capitalist economy and the directions it is heading, and a high-quality discussion of the nature and pace of the transformations in the former Stalinized countries of the ex-Soviet Union and East European were held at the congress. There was also the beginning of a direct discussion of the relationship between the historic program of the FI and the changing world situation. Much more needs to be done, but if these modest steps are truly a beginning of a discussion that will be continued and extended throughout the world movement, the 14th World Congress will have registered an important step forward for the FI.

Much the same can be said for the question of drawing a balance sheet of recent party build-

ing efforts since the last congress. Many sections had fused with left currents coming from widely different traditions. Some of these experiences have been disastrous. What has been lacking has been a balance sheet of these experiences. But an even more elementary necessity has been for the communication of information about these varied experiences. This has also been lacking. For example, leading members of the International only learned much later that the Swiss section in the French-speaking part of Switzerland dissolved itself into a larger formation. Part of this lack of communication is the result of a drastic cutback in the staff of the International.

Once again, while the pre-congress bulletins did little to correct this lack, the majority report on Building the International made a few mod-

est but significant steps in this direction. That report offered an interesting framework for thinking through the various types of potential partners Fourth Internationalists face. Significantly, it also began to draw a balance sheet on some of the experiences of specific sections. These are positive developments. If these discussions are the beginning of a far-reaching debate throughout the International and not just congress formalities, the 14th World Congress will have played an important role in reestablishing the kind of necessary political, programmatic, and organizational clarity that has been lacking over the last period and which is vital if the Fourth International is to fulfill its historical mission of helping provide leadership for the struggle for a socialist world. □

Historical Background to the Conflict in Former Yugoslavia

Continued from page 2

the Romanian socialist parties in the pre-World War I era and during World War I).

The conflict between Tito and Stalin, which came into the open within a few years after the establishment of the Yugoslav socialist republic, had one particularly unfavorable by-product. Witch-hunt trials against "pro-Tito" elements in the Communist parties of Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland made the idea of a Balkan Socialist Federation taboo, as well as the idea of a larger federation of socialist republics in Eastern Europe (which the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy would have taken as a threat to its continued political domination of the region). Thus Russian Stalinism contributed to keeping nations separated, even if they were "brotherly socialist" nations, and the Russian-dominated USSR played the role of Big Brother. (A common joke among the non-Russian peoples of Stalinist Eastern Europe was, "Question: I don't get it. Which is it? Is the Soviet Union our brother or our friend? We keep hearing both things. Answer: It's our brother. You can choose your friends.")

Stalinism, with its roots in the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian revolution, taught lessons against international workers solidarity, both by precept and example. Within Yugoslavia, the Tito-led Yugoslav Communist Party itself suffered from bureaucratic deformation. It had been trained in the Stalin school, and while it seemed to have overcome some of that training, as a necessary part of making a revolution, there was much it had learned that was never unlearned.

Particularly when the perquisites of power became available, bureaucratic degeneration affected even those cadre who might at one time have been good militants of the mass movement. One especially disastrous by-product of bureaucratism in Tito's party was the assignment of privileges and favored positions, especially in the military and security police sections of the bureaucracy, to those of Serbian background (as opposed to those of Croatian, Bos-

nian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Hungarian, or Albanian background). In fact, the mistreatment and marginalizing of people of Albanian nationality in the Serb-dominated province of Kosovo was one of the early signs of bureaucratization setting in. Another sign was that while "workers councils" were established during the time of the Tito-Stalin conflict, and given a role to play in plant management, these councils were kept localized and were not allowed a part in federation-wide decision making.

Likewise, bureaucratism was reflected in foreign policy as the Tito regime (while claiming to be "non-aligned") in fact began to collaborate with imperialism in certain areas, rather than to consistently side with the struggles of workers and the oppressed around the world. And of course in the last decades of the Tito regime, the Yugoslav economy was opened up more and more to penetration by finance capital and was integrated more and more into the capitalist world market, including the influence of the IMF. Capitalist elements within all the republics and among all the nationalities of the Yugoslav federation were thus strengthened. And when the collapse of Soviet influence over Eastern Europe occurred, and moves toward capitalist restoration began throughout Eastern Europe, in 1989 and after, pro-capitalist elements, especially among the professionals and middle classes of all the Yugoslav nationalities, grew even stronger.

The Bureaucracies Place Their Own Caste Interests Higher Than Those of the Workers

Looking back for a moment over the Yugoslav experience of the past 50 years, we can see that the Tito-Stalin conflict had its roots in the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy's willingness to bargain away the interests of the Yugoslav workers and peasants, and their Titoist leadership, for the sake of a larger "deal" with Anglo-American imperialism. It is ironic that the Tito leadership soon began to do the same thing in relation to the masses in its own country and internationally.

The workers and peasants of Yugoslavia had, one must remember, fought a costly but suc-

cessful guerrilla war against the German Nazi imperialist occupation and its local capitalist collaborators. That is what enabled them to take power and carry through the socialist transformation of property relations (expropriation of the expropriators). Meanwhile, without consulting the Yugoslavs, Stalin, in the tradition of corrupt labor misleadership, had promised Churchill, the representative of British imperialism, a "50-50" sharing of "spheres of influence" in Yugoslavia — in other words, to leave Yugoslavia open to the penetration of British capital. The mass-based popular revolution led by Tito's organization closed off that possibility for British (and Allied French and U.S.) capitalism.

The Stalinist bureaucracy retaliated against the Tito leadership for violating the sweetheart deal it had worked out with the Western bosses. But with the support of its mass base, the Tito leadership was able to successfully resist Stalin's vindictiveness. However, the Tito leadership's own bureaucratic inclinations soon led it into policies not serving the interests of the majority of Yugoslav workers and peasants. As always, pressure from the wealthy imperialist powers played a role.

The imperialists struck against the revolution more effectively than Stalin — they employed military intervention in Greece with crushing effect. In Greece, a mass-based anti-Nazi Resistance movement had the potential to follow the Yugoslav example onto the road of socialist revolution, and the Yugoslav revolutionaries supported their Greek brothers and sisters for a while, but then backed off. These were opening shots in the outbreak of the Cold War, which was essentially a worldwide drive for counter-revolution spearheaded by U.S. imperialism. That drive was aimed as much against the colonial revolution (a swiftly developing movement in all of Asia, Africa, and Latin America against European and North American domination), and against the labor movement within the imperialist countries themselves, as it was against countries where capitalism was overthrown.

The Cold War

Throughout the Cold War the Stalinist bureaucracy, in the USSR and elsewhere, played an ambiguous role. A self-protective reflex prompted the Stalinists in the late 1940s, using military-bureaucratic methods, to overturn capitalist economic relations in the countries or territories their armies controlled (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, and also Manchuria and North Korea). Guerrilla warfare under Stalinist leadership was also encouraged in many areas (Malaya, the Philippines, Brazil, Colombia, etc.). One (perhaps unintended) result was the colossal Chinese revolution of 1949, followed by the Korean war and war in French Indochina. The result was the overthrow of capitalism and the consolidation of postcapitalist "workers states" in North Korea and North Vietnam as well as in China (though these states were all dominated and disfigured by bureaucratic castes modeled on Stalin's in the USSR). During the 1950s the spread of anticapitalist revolution (however distorted) in countries previously dominated by colonialism encouraged serious struggles

aimed at breaking out of the stranglehold of colonial backwardness. (In many colonial or semi-colonial countries, Stalinist parties held mass struggles back or misled them, resulting in defeats for the Guatemalan, Iranian, Iraqi, Brazilian, Chilean, and other revolutions.)

One country where the national liberation struggle was surprisingly successful, owing to an unusually capable leadership (not dominated by the Stalinist bureaucratic outlook), was Cuba. The Cubans found a way of standing up effectively against imperialist pressure. There were indications that the Algerian revolution might follow the Cuban example, but its leadership in the end gave in to imperialist pressure. In Yugoslavia, though there was ferment among the youth, especially in the late 1960s, as worldwide revolutionary struggles intensified, the bureaucratic policies of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism (the opposite of the Cuban policy of combating imperialism) held sway in foreign policy; and in domestic policy, bureaucratic privilege deepened. Factory managers were allowed to make deals with foreign corporations, and the Serbian section of the bureauc-

racy continued to enjoy preferential status over those of non-Serb nationality.

By the late 1980s, with Tito's death and a deepening social and economic crisis in Yugoslavia, a reflection of the downturn in the world capitalist market, with which the Yugoslav economy had been increasingly tied, the dominant Serbian section of the ruling bureaucracy chose to drop the pretense of Marxism (in its Titoist-Stalinist form) as its guiding ideology and turned to a blatant chauvinist ideology, the idea of a Greater Serbia, and a policy of unrestrained Serbian domination within the Yugoslav federation. This was the policy adopted by the dominant wing of the bureaucracy led by Milosevic (and supported by the Serb-dominated army and secret police). The result (as Branka Magas, Marilyn Vogt-Downey, and others have shown) was to drive the non-Serb republics to secede from the federation. Milosevic and company retaliated by unleashing the brutal wars and land grabbing that we see today, which Marilyn Vogt-Downey discusses further in the accompanying article. □

What Should Socialists Do in Relation to the War in Ex-Yugoslavia?

Continued from page 3

mately led to military expeditions of conquest and plunder.³

This type of class-conscious organizing is truly the only force which in the long run can stop the slaughter and "ethnic cleansing." However, the abuse of the population's fears by local bureaucratic elites and their henchmen does not mean that all sides are equally bad. The Serbian Stalinists and their militia forces and leaders (Milosevic, Karadzic, Mladic, Raznatovic, etc.) and their determination to create a "Greater Serbia" — which is really nothing more than a land-grabbing expedition — are primarily responsible for the problem.

In response to this difficult situation, certain political demands need to be raised. The main

political task for revolutionary socialists is first of all to try to build political movements that can stop the organized Serbian aggression. An important political demand to raise, for example, is that imperialism lift the arms embargo of Bosnia, so that the Bosnians can defend themselves. The right of the non-Serb peoples to independence in general, and their right to defend that independence, need to be stressed. Another demand that needs to be raised is for an end to the economic blockade of Serbia. This blockade is only strangling the Serbian workers and makes it harder for them to stand up against the chauvinist hate-mongering bureaucrats and their secret police apparatus, which is still intact.

Surely there are in the former Yugoslav workers state, authentic worker activists and

currents, whether organized or not, with whom revolutionary socialists can seek contact and collaboration. Internationally, the genuine Marxists can explain what is happening, what the role of imperialism and Stalinism have been in creating the mess that we see today. We can raise suitable transitional economic and political demands. These transitional demands can serve as a basis to mobilize workers and their allies through united front campaigns against imperialist interests and expose imperialist maneuvers. Such demands could point the way forward and find a resonance among workers both in the imperialist countries and in the former Yugoslavia. □

Defend Tong Yi — Urgent Action Needed

Continued from page 5

journalists. Tong Yi had been accepted to Columbia University for a master's program in political science, and upon her arrest Columbia President George Rupp made a direct appeal for her release.

Write to the Chinese authorities and make them aware that you know about Tong Yi's situation and demand that she be released immediately or at least be allowed access to a lawyer of her choice to appeal her case in accordance with Chinese law.

Jiang Zemin (Greeting: His Excellency)
President
State Council

Beijing, PRC 100701
Fax: 011-8610-467-7351

Li Peng (Greeting: His Excellency)
Premier
Guowuyuan
9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie
Beijing 100032
Fax: 011-8610-512-5810

Tian Qiyu Zhang (Greeting: Dear Director)
Gonganting
Fujiapo, Wuchang
Wuhanshi 430070
Hubeisheng
People's Republic of China

Human Rights in China (HRIC)

Human Rights in China is a politically independent, non-profit organization founded by scholars and students from the People's Republic of China (PRC). HRIC's work involves documenting and publicizing human rights abuses in China, informing Chinese people about international human rights standards and the mechanisms by which these are enforced, and assisting those persecuted and imprisoned in the PRC for nonviolent exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms. HRIC publishes the quarterly journal *China Rights Forum*. For more information, E-mail HRIC at hrichtina@igc.apc.org or write to Human Rights in China, 485 Fifth Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10017. □

3. Of course Milosevic's so far successful chauvinist campaign, and the resulting military conflicts throughout ex-Yugoslavia, have made organizing of any kind extremely difficult. — *Eds.*

On "The Dual Task of Trotskyism Today"

In the July-August issue, my discussion article, "The Dual Task of Trotskyism Today," appeared with an angry rejoinder from Marilyn Vogt-Downey. It is unusual for *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* to print a rejoinder to an article in the very same issue of the magazine as the article itself (unless a comrade is being subjected to a venomously personal attack which requires immediate comment). Comrade Vogt-Downey insisted that, in fact, it would be necessary for her rejoinder to appear in the very same issue as my article so that she could respond to alleged "personal slanders" of her. I offered to remove anything that could be shown to be slanderous, and I did remove a few words and phrases which were not slanderous but which Marilyn found objectionable.

Readers can judge for themselves whether this comrade has actually been slandered in the article I wrote (I am satisfied that she was not), and I believe that my political disagreements with her are fairly stated. Her undoubtedly sincere belief that she is not engaging in sectarian polemics but simply offering "Marxist criticism" is undercut by the tone of her original critique of the Fourth International Manifesto, no less than by the tone of her rejoinder.

As with tone, so with substance. Her claim is that the FI Manifesto of 1992 — *Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century* — "is not a Trotskyist document," a claim refuted by a serious reading of the Manifesto (available from this magazine for \$1.00 plus 50¢ shipping costs).

I do want to respond to a couple of aspects of her rejoinder which are aimed at me. Her ugly personal comments about me represent a way of debating that should have no place among comrades associated with this journal. Unless she believes in the need for an unrelenting factional war, it is quite destructive and counterproductive to throw around such language as she uses.

I am most concerned, however, that Comrade Vogt-Downey falsely attributes to me the following views: (1) that I believe one should "refrain from criticism altogether out of a sense of personal loyalty to the document's authors" — Ernest Mandel, Steve Bloom, Carol McAllister, and other comrades associated with the Fourth International; and (2) that I have some "scheme...[of] 'regroupment' with 'good

comrades'" which necessitates muting political criticisms.

Regarding the first allegation: I have, at various times, expressed differences with Ernest Mandel, Steve Bloom, and Carol McAllister — but only when I actually disagree with them. Also, I myself did not "refrain from criticism altogether" of the Manifesto, but in fact expressed a criticism in my article that the Manifesto did not make clear the links between its revolutionary Marxist content and the historic perspectives of the Trotskyist movement. That I express even more disagreement with Marilyn Vogt-Downey's polemic does not mean I think she is "disloyal" to say what she thinks — it simply means that I disagree with her.

Regarding the second allegation: I certainly *do* believe that if there is no regroupment with good comrades, we will be left with what we have right now — the fragmentation of those who adhere to the revolutionary Marxist program of the Fourth International. I also believe that broader regroupment can in some cases make sense — depending on specific circumstances. I discussed this in my article. But I do not believe, and have never said or "implied," that this necessitates or can be fruitfully advanced by muting political criticisms when one has such criticisms. Rather, political honesty and clarity are necessary to advance serious regroupment efforts of any kind.

For example, while I value the contributions that Marilyn Vogt-Downey has made and can continue to make to the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, it would be wrong simply to be silent in the face of what seems to me a sectarian and wrong-headed polemic against a major document (basically a sound, valuable document) of the Fourth International.

Paul Le Blanc
Pittsburgh

Corrections to Marilyn Vogt-Downey's Response to Paul Le Blanc

[In Marilyn Vogt-Downey's response to Paul Le Blanc in the July-August 1995 issue of *BIDOM*, several last-minute editorial changes, intended to clarify her arguments, were mistakenly included, without her authorization, in the version that went to press. In the following statement she indicates what they were.]

I want to point out the following passages in my response to Paul Le Blanc

which were introduced inadvertently by the editors without my permission:

1. In column one, paragraph 4:

a. Regarding Paul's charge that I have no clear notion of what the Fourth International is or what it can become, I did not say, "I have as clear a notion as he has." I do not know how clear Paul's notion is and did not intend to make such a comparison.

b. Regarding my attendance at the World Congress, I did not authorize the phrase: "interacted with many good comrades there." I did interact with many comrades there, of course, but I would not want to describe my interaction this way.

2. In column two, last full paragraph: regarding Paul's tendency to equate with sectarianism Marxist criticism of his ideas, I did not use the phrase "and the ideas of his 'good comrades.'"

These three additions added an unpleasant and unnecessary tone of negativity that distracted from what I wanted to say.

Marilyn Vogt-Downey
Brooklyn, New York

Fourth International Manifesto

Today I received the July-August issue of *BIDOM* and read the exchange between Paul Le Blanc and Marilyn Vogt-Downey. Le Blanc remarks at the end of his essay that the exchange reveals some of the tensions among supporters of *BIDOM*.

Disagreement and tension, of course, have the potential to be eventually and primarily constructive or destructive. I hope that *BIDOM* supporters will keep in mind that in the broader context of politics today what we have in common far outweighs our differences.

For what it's worth, I thought Vogt-Downey's critique of the 1992 FI Manifesto was generally valid and well taken. Putting aside some assertions that I consider to be polemical exaggerations — i.e., "[the authors]...have simply abandoned it [Marxism]" — I think she is intellectually correct.

I also think that Le Blanc's defense of his strategic perspective and tactical political course is well taken and valid. This is manifest in the fact that I am with Le Blanc in the FI Caucus of Solidarity and as a signer of the "Call for Clarity" (in the recent FI Congress discussion), which I think is an expression of concerns similar to those of Vogt-Downey.

Dayne Goodwin
Salt Lake City

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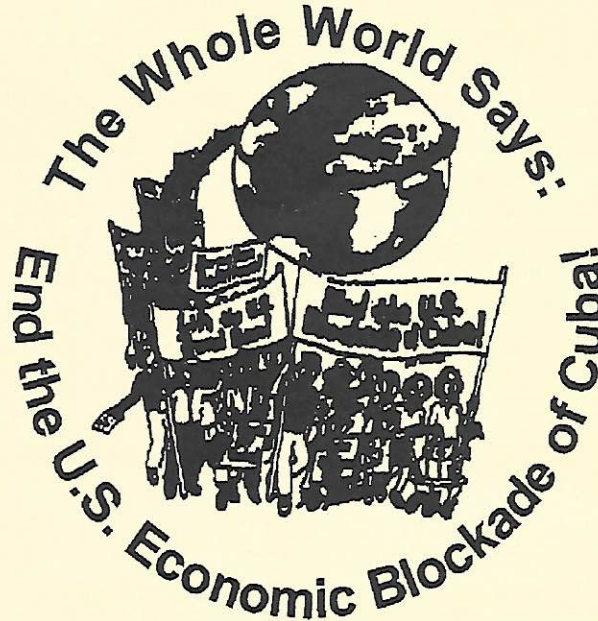
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