

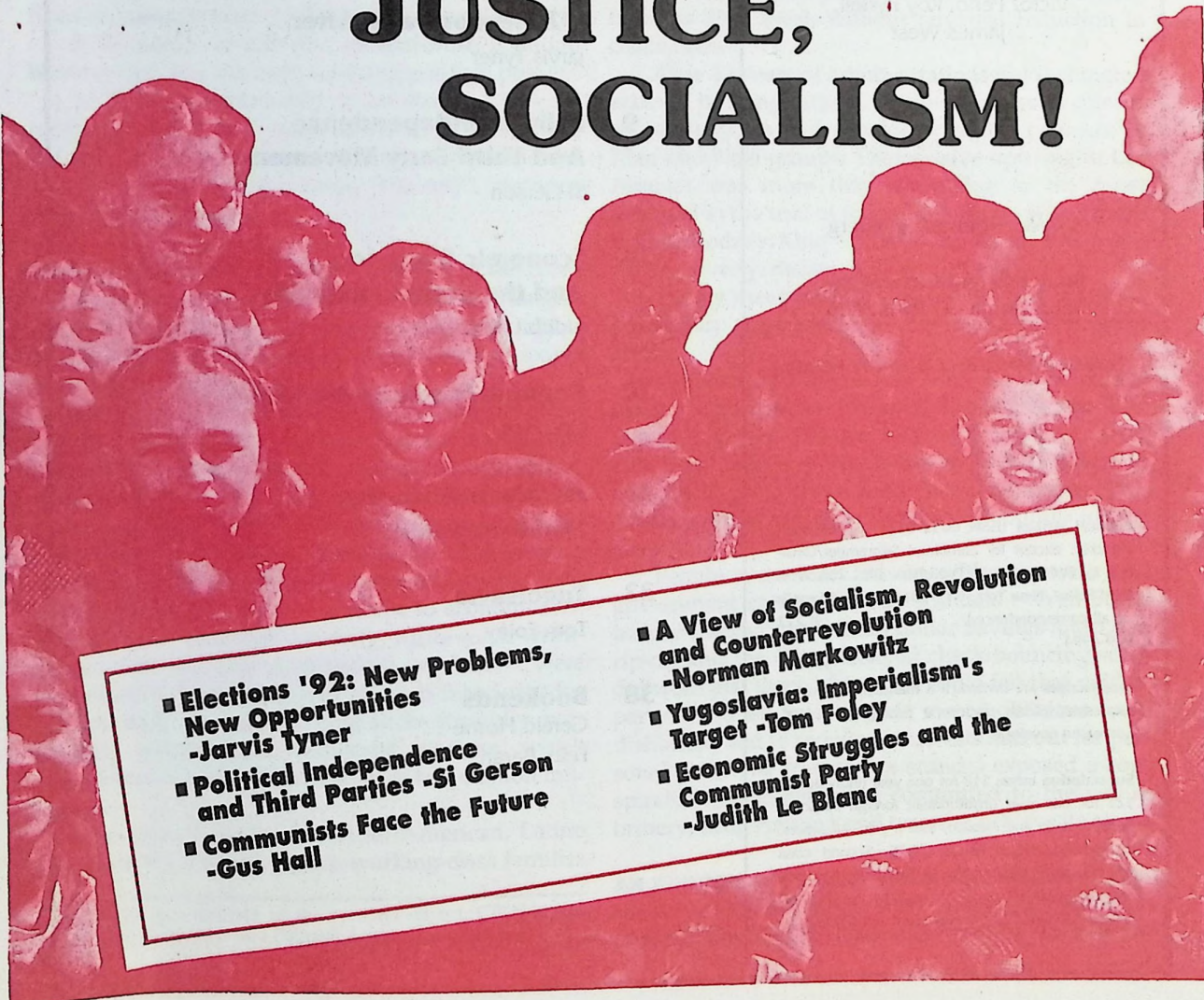
Political Affairs

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- **Elections '92: New Problems, New Opportunities**
-Jarvis Tyner
 - **Political Independence and Third Parties** -Si Gerson
 - **Communists Face the Future**
-Gus Hall

- **A View of Socialism, Revolution and Counterrevolution**
-Norman Markowitz
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'92 Elections and After: New Problems and Opportunities

Jarvis Tyner

The results of the 1992 elections show that the democratic and progressive majority in the United States is alive and well. Although there have been ups and down, and periods of demobilization and confusion over the past decade, this majority delivered a very important victory on November 3.

What happened was that a broad coalition of labor, the racially oppressed, women, environmentalists, seniors and youth came out in great numbers – greater than usual – and defeated an incumbent right-wing administration, as well as a well-financed conservative challenge from Ross Perot.

It is correct to call this an anti-Bush coalition because that was the main unifying political point.

As in politics generally, in an election, it is the motion of the main contending class and social forces that has the greatest influence on the outcome and on future developments. The 1992 elections were no exception.

TWELVE YEARS OF ATTACK ■ The crisis in the economy – the worst since the 1930's – had the strongest impact on the voters. For 12 years trade union rights and the standard of living of most working people had been under severe attack.

On the eve of the elections, the country was at a critical juncture: twenty-seven months of economic stagnation and massive job loss had accumulated; twenty million were unemployed and underemployed; hundreds of the nation's largest corporations were "downsizing," slicing tens of thousands off their payrolls. Sections of the working class who in the past had been more immune to economic crisis – workers with high seniority, white collar workers, middle stratum professional workers – were experiencing unemployment and job insecurity for the first time. There were sharp strike struggles, particularly among basic industrial workers, which contributed to a heightened level of trade union militancy.

The special plight of African American, Latino and Native American Indian working-class families

was a national disaster. Millions were out of work or underemployed, without adequate social services.

The massive influx of drugs and a related increase in crime and health problems added chaos to crisis. Under the banner of fighting crime and drugs, police brutality was on the rise. Tens of thousands of poor and unemployed young people were being jailed. A whole generation of African American and Latino youth were being criminalized – more African American youth were in jail than in college. The prison population more than doubled from its 1980 level, without any real reduction in crime rates.

After 12 years of administrations in Washington actively pushing racism, there was a rise in attacks by racist gangs and a bolder political presence of Klan and Nazi groups. The massive uprising in Los Angeles was more than a reaction to the racist acquittal in the trial of the police officers who brutally beat Rodney King – it was also a reaction to the rise in poverty, racism and hopelessness.

By any measurement, the nation was facing an emergency situation requiring urgent government action.

This was also the first election since the confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court, and the shameful abuse of Anita Hill. That, and renewed attacks on Roe v. Wade, had awakened great concern for women's rights. Pro-equality forces mobilized across the country for the elections.

People were also fed up with corporate and government corruption and scandals – Wall Street insider trading, the trillion dollar Savings and Loan rip-off and the Congressional check-bouncing scandal were just three of many. People felt that neither party could be trusted; that most politicians were dishonest, tied to moneyed interests and out for personal gain. The Iran-contra scandal exposed a conspiratorial administration committed to the use of bribery, drug running and terror to achieve its aims.

AN ECONOMIC & HEALTH CARE EMERGENCY ■ On the eve of the elections, forty million people were without any health insurance, twenty six million

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were receiving food stamps and three million were homeless. Thirty million were hungry – with two out of every five children going to bed without food in their stomachs.

Forty-one out of fifty states were in fiscal crisis, as were sixty percent of all county governments. Twenty-five percent of all cities were near bankruptcy. This was the result of 12 years of federal government policy of cutting funding for social programs and transferring responsibility to state and local governments.

With all of this, most Americans were convinced that their children for the first time would not be better off than they themselves were. Economic instability and uncertainty prevailed, creating a strong majority opinion that it was time for political change.

People had had enough of these terrible conditions, enough of the ineffectiveness and indifference of the Bush administration and Congress. The term “gridlock” (an immovable traffic jam) struck a chord with people in describing the unwillingness or inability of the government to find solutions to the crisis. There was growing alienation from the two parties of monopoly and growing support for a third party.

Basically, people were fed up with the anti-labor, racist, reactionary policies of the 12 years of Republican rule. But it is important to understand that the problems that weighed so heavily on the hearts and minds of the voters are rooted not simply in the policies of either party, but in the systemic general crisis of U.S. capitalism itself.

PEOPLE IN MOTION ■ Prior to the elections, there were a number of mass marches for economic justice, which helped raise voters’ confidence that Bush could be defeated, particularly the “Save our Cities, Save our Children” demonstration in May. The strike of Ravenswood steel workers and the Caterpillar auto workers showed a heightened militancy on the part of the working class, despite the fact that the Caterpillar strike did not achieve a good settlement.

After the racist verdict in the Rodney King beating trial, hundreds of rallies, school closings and mass marches took place around the country. There were thousands of public expressions of unity and anti-racism, placing the injustices suffered by racially oppressed people at the center of the election debate.

Abortion rights – which through the ‘80s had

been a key issue used by right-wing politicians – turned into a major negative for the right wing because of the upsurge of the pro-choice movement. This helped galvanize a powerful women’s vote, which included many Republican women, determined to elect pro-choice candidates.

All of these things came to a head, making it possible to mobilize an electoral majority against Bush.

A COMPLICATED ELECTION ■ The election was one of the most complicated ever. A majority of the electorate wanted change and were opposed to the right-wing policies of President Bush, but did not have a strong alternative in Bill Clinton, who was governor of a low wage, right-to-work state. Clinton was a centrist among the Democrats running in the primaries; his policies are basically pro-corporate and he does not oppose U.S. aggression abroad. During the campaign, he made several open appeals to racism and anti-labor sentiments.

Despite this, over 50 percent of labor voters and 80 percent of African American voters still supported Clinton because they understood the critical importance of defeating Bush.

Things were further complicated by the fact that, for the first time in over 40 years, there was a strong third candidate.

Ross Perot, the billionaire capitalist, entered the race with an effective media presence and unlimited personal funds. Though a lifelong right-wing Republican, Perot was now posing as a concerned populist who would deliver the country out of the economic crisis.

This was a new experience for the U.S. electorate: to find a way to fight for their interests in a three-way race full of right-wing mudslinging and demagoguery. While the results were close, Clinton was the clear winner, pulling 43 percent of the vote. Bush received 38 percent and Perot got 19 percent.

WHICH WAY THE ELECTORATE? ■ Now that the election is over, there is a struggle over how to interpret its meaning. How positive the election of Clinton and the defeat of Bush will be depends more on the people’s struggle than on Clinton himself. The question is not simply what Clinton will or will not do; it is what kind of action will the people take. At this critical juncture, the political course of the new administration is not unalterable. It can be pushed in a healthier direction than the one it may now be considering.

The right wing and the political establishment understand this well, and are doing everything possible to prevent things going too far in a pro-people direction. They want to twist the interpretation of the results of the election into a mandate for conservative, pro-big business policies. Some are actually saying that the vote calls for a continuation of the policies of Reagan and Bush, pointing out that Clinton is a moderate Democrat.

The corporations have a lot at stake in giving a conservative spin to the mandate. On election night, after Clinton was declared the winner, one New York TV news anchor put it this way: "Clinton won because he moved the Democratic Party back to the center and won back the votes of moderate Democrats." Some others are saying it was a victory for the "Bubbas" (conservative Reagan Democrats).

Echoing that same theme, Gary Langer, a senior polling analyst for ABC News, in the November 16th issue of the Wall Street Journal wrote: "Voters did not reject the heretofore durable Republican presidential coalition; they simply elected a Democrat to run it. With luck, skill, a floundering opponent and a bad economy, Bill Clinton successfully hijacked the GOP bus." This suggests that people voted for Clinton to stay on the Bush/Republican bus and continue those policies. Nothing could be further from the truth. Although there is evidence that Clinton himself might want to take that same bus, the voters were sending the opposite message, calling for a more liberal, progressive, independent direction.

This is really a debate on the course the country will take. It is a debate on mass thought patterns; on the nature of the changes demanded by the voters.

REPUBLICAN CONVENTION □ Nothing answers this more clearly than the overwhelmingly negative reaction to the Republican Convention, where the party's right wing was fully in charge. They dominated the proceedings from the floor and from the podium. The convention was a hate fest designed to use redbaiting, racism, extreme personal attacks, hysteria and even physical intimidation to mobilize against Clinton.

On the floor there were Republican youth, acting like modern-day Brown Shirts. They subjected some reporters to physical and verbal harassment; the stench of fascism was in the air.

This was the convention that brought forth "family values" as its main theme, sharply attacking people-serving government programs. Pat

Buchanan's particularly vicious speech declared the Republican Party "God's Party," and portrayed the election as a holy war.

The "family values" campaign was basically anti-working class, racist and anti-women. It blamed the sorry state of the U.S. economy on working-class families, especially those headed by women. They redbaited, labor-baited, race-baited, gay-baited and viciously attacked the fight for women's equality. They even "green-baited," trying to blame environmentalists for the crisis in the economy.

The Republican Convention aimed to divert attention from the economy and push the electorate to the right with what was one of the most shameful displays of demagoguery and hypocrisy in the history of U.S. politics.

But the most significant thing about it is that it did not work. Instead, it scared the nation. Six percent of registered Republicans changed their registration after the convention. Bush went down in the polls. Mary Matalin, the Bush's campaign's political director, said, "We were in a deep hole after the convention.... Even if we'd had a coherent message then, we were spending our entire time denying that the Republican Party was a bunch of homophobic bigots."

ELECTION OF 103RD CONGRESS □ The vote in the Congressional races also shows a clear mandate for a move away from the right. The historic election of the first African American woman to the U.S. Senate, Carol Moseley Braun, along with the election of three other liberal women, brings the total number of women in the Senate to six. All but one are liberal to progressive. Women's ranks in the House grew from 28 to 45.

The Senate will also have its first Native American Indian member, Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado.

The number of African Americans in Congress grew to 40 altogether. That was an increase of 13, which is the largest growth in the number of African American elected officials in Congress ever. A number of these new Congresspersons come from the deep South - from five states that have never before elected a Black person to Congress. Latino representation in Congress went from 11 to 17, including the election of the first Puerto Rican woman, Nydia Velasquez from Brooklyn, New York.

These candidates all ran on the Democratic Party line, but in most cases could not have gotten elected without building movements that were inde-

pendent of the Democratic Party machine.

Martin Luther King's birthday was finally made official in Arizona. Yet there were some defeats: – such as Yeakel in Pennsylvania and Abrams in New York – and some negative referendums were passed, including term limitations in 14 states and anti-gay rights in Colorado. Nevertheless, all of this could not have been achieved if the electorate had been in favor of continuing the conservative direction. The victories of these candidates represent a clear-cut defeat for the right wing.

MULTI-RACIAL WORKING CLASS ■ A look at the election returns reveals certain patterns. There was a tremendous mobilization of voters through the unions, civil rights organizations, student, women's, and seniors' organizations.

The results show that in the big industrial centers there was a bigger vote for Democrats than in 1988. This is where the greatest concentrations of multi-racial, unionized industrial workers live. Bush was only able to pull 25 percent of the vote from union households; Clinton received 55 percent of that vote and Perot 21 percent.

Organized labor played a significant role. Despite their dissatisfaction with Clinton, the unions did a tremendous job registering and mobilizing voters. The AFL-CIO registered over five million voters and issued millions of pieces of literature. The Teamsters alone registered another 100,000 voters and distributed five million pieces of literature. They also mobilized thousands to work at phone banks to get out the vote. Overall, organized labor produced over 300,000 volunteers on election day.

In the South, the African American vote made the difference. While nationally African American voters gave Clinton 82 percent of their votes, in Southern states the percentages ranged from the mid-80s to the mid-90s. The same thing happened in newly created congressional districts, redesigned to increase minority representation.

In Illinois, the African American turnout nearly doubled from 1988, no doubt stimulated by the overwhelming support for Carol Moseley Braun. Ms. Braun also did considerably better than Clinton statewide, and better than the late African American mayor Harold Washington in some of the predominantly white wards of Chicago.

There were many examples of voters around the country rejecting racism and male supremacy in order to elect record numbers of racially oppressed and women candidates.

The activities of Jesse Jackson and the Congressional Black Caucus in mobilizing voters were decisive as well. The bus tours and voter registration mobilizations, the big rallies and massive distributions of literature, all helped to produce large numbers of new voters, especially in some crucial states. Of the newly registered, 48 percent voted for Clinton, only 30 percent for Bush and 22 percent for Perot.

In the West and Southwest, Mexican-American voters made the difference. In the big cities of the Northeast, the African-American and Puerto Rican vote was also higher by comparison.

As Washington pollster Vic Fingerhut put it, "Take away the trade union and minority vote and Clinton would have lost."

Clinton, in the final analysis, only won by five points. Without the voter registration and mobilization by labor and the African American and Latino communities and the women's movement, he could not have won. The many key races for the Senate and the House of Representatives also helped to boost the Democratic ticket.

OVERWHELMING VOTE AGAINST BUSH ■ More than a victory for Clinton, this election was a major defeat for George Bush, the Republican Party and the ultra right. Bush was defeated among almost every major category of voters. He only received 11 percent of the African American vote and 25 percent among Latinos. He got only 24 percent of the vote in union households and 37 percent among women. He lost in every income category except the highest (over \$75,000). He lost in every age category. Seventy-eight percent of Jewish voters went for Clinton and only 12 percent for Bush. Bush lost by eight points among Catholics.

Bush lost every region of the country except the South, which he won by only one point. He lost among white voters in every region, also except the South, where he won by 14 points. He also won among white, fundamentalist Christians, receiving 61 percent of their votes.

Most of all Bush lost overwhelmingly among those 34 million voters whose financial situations were worse today than four years ago. Among those voters he only got 14 percent to Clinton's 61 percent.

Perot's late reentry basically split the anti-Bush vote and resulted in Clinton only winning a plurality overall, although in some states Perot did take votes from Bush. Perot received his biggest support – around 30 percent – from the 27 million voters

who consider themselves independent.

In labor circles and among African Americans there were many reservations about Clinton: his support for NAFTA and for the death penalty, among other things, created misgivings. On the other hand, many were attracted to Clinton's pledge to make a change. His position that the policies of Reagan and Bush had ruined the country, his stand against trickle-down economics, his call for taxing the rich and support for a national health care program, his history of opposition to the war in Vietnam, his pro-choice and pro-civil rights stands, along with his main slogan of "people first" allowed for some hope.

Clinton was not seen so much as a savior but as the way to defeat Bush. The main characteristic of the election was that it was a massive rejection of the political right; of George Bush, the Republican Party and its right-wing policies.

WHAT THE VOTE CALLS FOR ■ People voted for Clinton mostly out of concern over the economic crisis, particularly the growing unemployment and underemployment. This is why the Bush campaign issued phony figures on the unemployment situation at the 11th hour. People voted because they want to do something about mass homelessness, hunger and poverty. They want federal help for the cities and states in fiscal trouble and health insurance for those without. They voted for choice and against racist violence.

The vote therefore calls for such steps as a massive jobs program to rebuild the cities and the infrastructure, and against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The vote is a mandate for the elimination of discrimination based on race and gender and for affirmative action. It is a vote for an end to attacks on the victims of AIDS and for a well-financed, accelerated federal program to find a cure for AIDS and provide care for its victims. It calls for an administration committed to women's right to choose. It calls for the protection of Social Security. It calls for taxing the rich.

The vote also calls on government to finally deliver the peace dividend. Voters want the government to act based on the reality that the cold war is over. Most voters are ready to cut the military budget dramatically and shift that money to human needs. Most voters are not for more Gulf wars and don't support aggression around the world.

REDBAITING REJECTED ■ It is significant that the voters rejected a president who has taken loud and public personal credit for the defeat of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. To all true believers in capitalism this "achievement" should have been a primary reason for supporting Bush. However, this issue moved very few voters into Bush's column, and, considering the current chaos in that region of the world, may have actually hurt him.

Fortunately, the U.S. people didn't buy Bush's anti-Communist campaign. The fact that the electorate in the most powerful capitalist country defeated a sitting right-wing president is a significant setback for the right wing worldwide, especially when one considers the role he and Ronald Reagan played in supporting and mobilizing reaction internationally.

The disruptive and divisive use of racism and anti-Communism has been a major, long-term characteristic of U.S. politics. It has been the stock in trade of many right wing candidates who rely on confusion and backwardness of sections of the electorate. Without racism and anti-Communism, such candidates would have had little chance of winning.

But this time they did not win.

In order to vote for Clinton millions of voters had to reject the huge redbaiting attack launched against him by the Republicans. Bush and Quayle pushed the anti-Communist button as hard as they could on Clinton's activities against the Vietnam War, his draft record and his trip to Moscow as a student. They questioned Clinton's patriotism and had the CIA, the State Department and FBI investigate him and his family. Everything was done to red-bait Clinton out of the running.

This, despite the fact that Clinton is not by any means a left winger. The aim of this old trick was to divert the electorate's attention from the economic crisis. What is new is that it failed.

NEW MASS THOUGHT PATTERNS ■ That their attack didn't work is very significant. It is a tribute to the U.S. people that they overcame such intense redbaiting and kept their eyes on the prize. This shows a growth in consciousness among millions of U.S. working people. Unlike the ruling class, the people believe that the end of the cold war means the end of the old anti-Communist hysteria.

Another element in the election was the strong appeal to racism contained in the attacks on Clinton for being too supportive of civil rights. Meetings

with civil rights leaders were cast in a negative light, as catering to "special interests" by the media and the Bush-Quayle campaign. The same was done when Clinton met with labor leaders. (When Clinton met with business leaders, the real special interest, then he was being "responsible.")

To level the "special interests" charge at Clinton for developing alliances and trying to win the votes of African Americans and Latinos is in itself an appeal to racism, because it implies that the demand for racial equality is not in the interests of the country as a whole. When that same charge was made in connection with labor, it was an attack on the working class.

PEROT PHENOMENON ■ The Perot phenomenon shows that voters are prepared, en masse, to vote independent, an important reality of U.S. politics today. However Perot aimed to direct that new independence in an old right-wing direction.

Perot was a stealth right-wing candidate. His basic policies were the policies of a billionaire capitalist: pro-big business and reactionary. He did reject some of the right wing's pet issues, including abortion, and was more liberal on some social questions. He also questioned NAFTA – though from the standpoint of the autonomy of U.S. big business, not the loss of workers' jobs. But basically when it came to concretes, Perot was way over to the right.

The idea that it will take a big businessman with big business techniques to get the economy moving again is a complete coverup of the central role big business has played in creating the crisis. Perot is for eliminating the capital gains tax altogether. He is for cutting Social Security, "voluntarily" at first. He is for cordoning off of the ghettos of Dallas, and presumably other cities, in door-to-door search missions, throwing thousands into concentration camps without bail, in order to "stop drugs." His cure is worse than the disease.

There was more trouble than met the eye when Perot spoke before the NAACP. At that meeting he displayed personal contempt for African Americans. And a look at the hiring practices of his companies reveals that Perot is no supporter of equality.

The more people found out about Perot, the more he lost their support. One of his most damaging contributions to the 1992 elections was his disgraceful role in using over \$100 million of his own money to buy loyalty, buy silence in the case of Nofziger and Jordan, and buy votes.

The new level of crisis for the two-party system

can be seen, among other things, in the outrageously high cost of running election campaigns. It is pricing the working class, including organized labor, out of the election market. They can't match the big money of the corporations and the billionaire tycoons.

Campaign financing reform is therefore imperative. It must be high on the agenda of the independent forces. There must be a ceiling on campaign spending, including of personal funds. This is more than a question of fairness – democracy is at stake.

GROWTH OF INDEPENDENCE ■ Today there is no majority party in the United States. The Republican Party has lost a lot of support and there is some feeling that sections of the ruling class are ready to abandon it. The presence of third party candidates is becoming a permanent fixture in the U.S. electoral scene.

The growth in third party movements has support in very important labor circles. Labor Party Advocates has already signed up thousands of trade unionist committed to the idea of a third party. NOW, the National Organization for Women, has also initiated the 21st Century Party. The Green Party is also organizing and has managed to elect a number of its members to local office. The only socialist in the U.S. Congress, Bernie Sanders, won reelection in Vermont with 60 percent of the vote. There are regional parties like the Peace and Freedom Party in California: Gerald Horne, one of its candidates for U.S. Senate, received 280,000 votes; Evelina Alarcon, Chair of the Communist Party of Southern California, received 184,000 votes running for State Treasurer in last year's elections.

Most of these efforts are really pre-party formations – a third party is no longer a fringe idea. The problem is how to unite the various third party trends into one powerful national formation with a strong multi-national working-class presence. It is imperative that the progressive forces not allow the right wing and the government-sponsored phonies, like the New Alliance Party, to offer the only alternatives.

COMMUNIST CANDIDATES ■ Because of the many obstacles to running independent campaigns, the Communist Party decided not to run a presidential slate this year. Instead, the Party concentrated on running local candidates, not as a permanent policy but in response to the present situation.

In almost every case these candidates received higher votes than in previous elections. Illinois State

Representative candidate Frank Lumpkin's vote increased as did that of Rick Nagin, candidate for State Representative in Ohio. John Rummel, who ran for Congress on the Communist Party line in New Jersey, more than doubled his vote over that received in 1988.

However the real strength of these candidacies is not just the increase in votes, but the grass-roots character of the campaigns, the response of voters to the Communist Party's program and the level of participation of non-Party members.

Almost all the campaigns showed a new level of public support and an acceptance of the Party as a legitimate political force in the communities. When candidates who are Communists receive contributions from mass organizations, like Pittsburgh's Denise Winebrenner did from the NOW PAC, and are invited to speak at union halls and before fraternal organizations, like David Mirtz was in New York, clearly new opportunities are opening up.

The campaigns had many new features deserving study. They served as important vehicles for helping mobilize the anti-Bush coalition. Through election work, the Communist Party's constituency grew, and advances were made in building class and socialist consciousness.

The Party and its candidates helped bring clarity to the debate on some key ideological problems related to the election. With so much at stake, two key questions were how to work with the anti-Bush majority without fostering illusions about Clinton; and how to struggle against the tendency of some to stand on the sidelines because of dissatisfaction with Clinton's policies.

The Party understood the crucial nature of the presidential race. It could not obstain. Knowing the relative strength of the left/independent forces, the National Committee called for an all out effort to defeat Bush & Perot and elect a more pro-people Congress. This was in the framework of a continuing struggle against the wrong policies of Clinton.

This election had to be seen not solely on the electoral level, but through the prism of the class struggle. In the process of struggle for their own interest in this election, working people would understand the necessity to move to a higher level. Defeating Bush did not end the struggle but rather set the stage for greater struggles ahead.

The experience of the Communist candidates demonstrates that the Party must do much more than run protest campaigns and help others get elected. The possibilities for electing known Com-

munist to public office are greater now than they have been in decades. Electing Communists is key to advancing electoral democracy and the whole movement for political independence.

PRESSURING CLINTON ■ There is now a massive effort by contending forces to influence the main political direction of the Clinton administration.

Of course, the ruling class is pulling out all the stops to guarantee that Clinton will not move too far from Bush's policies. So far, Clinton's policies are liberal in form, to placate those who made his victory possible, but in essence they are pro-big business.

Clinton's December "summit" on the economy held in Little Rock reeked of that fact. Big Business had the strongest, most organized presence at that meeting, even though there were enough small business-types, liberals and progressives from labor, civil rights and other people-serving organizations to give it a politically liberal atmosphere.

The fact that Clinton invited folks in to "get their ideas" gives his administration an image of inclusion, of concern for the plight of the people. However, so far Clinton's appointments suggest something different. For posts dealing with the economy, he has appointed moderates and conservatives. For human service appointments, such as health and education, as well as labor, his choices and rumored choices tend to be moderate to liberal. There are no strong labor or progressive nominees.

LEFTOVERS FROM BUSH ■ One of the ways the right wing is applying pressure on the new administration is by creating new problems and crises. The fact that U.S. troops are now committed to Somalia, under the cover of fighting starvation, will put brakes on cutting the military budget. For the past 12 years the alarming rise in mass hunger and starvation, not only in the Third World but right here in the United States, has been ignored by the Reagan and Bush administrations. The motives for their new-found concern, just as they are leaving office, are highly suspect. It seems they intend to leave a host of problems which could serve to overwhelm the Clinton administration.

Clinton's appointments and his acceptance of Bush's last-minute intrigues show the political direction towards which he is inclined. But in estimating the future of Clinton's administration, it would be a mistake to view the situation as set in stone, or his political views as fixed.

Most people voted for Clinton not looking for a

miracle but looking for a president who was more liberal and would be more responsive to the problems confronting the people. In exit polls, well over 50 percent of those who voted for Clinton said they were anywhere from skeptical to suspicious of him. People understand that he will have to be pressured.

THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE ■ Individual politicians of course do influence and at times even determine events. But it is class and social forces in struggle that basically determine the main direction of politics and politicians. The 1992 elections cannot be viewed in the abstract, apart from the ongoing class struggle and the fight for progress in general.

These elections were an especially dynamic confrontation of contending class forces which brought about a very important change in the White House and Congress. Clinton will need a broad coalition and mass support, not only to lead the country but to win reelection. To do that he will have to be forced to move away from the Bush/Reagan legacy.

PUT ON THE MARCHING SHOES ■ What is needed is a tremendous effort to bring the people's true election mandate to life through mass pressure. The defeat of the right wing has given people new confidence that big changes are possible. The pessimism and demoralization resulting from the Reagan Bush years of arrogant reaction can be reversed.

The key is for people to be ready to put on their marching shoes in greater numbers than they have for more than a decade. Already, mass movements are building pressure around the need for national health care. The labor movement is gearing up to defeat NAFTA. The homeless are pushing for a commitment to build housing. The victims of racial inequality are looking for a major effort to fight discrimination, provide jobs and rebuild the cities. Women expect a White House that is solidly on their side for abortion rights and equality. AIDS activists expect much greater efforts to find a cure. Students are expecting to get their Pell Grants back. Millions are expecting family leave and a major cut in the military budget. Out of great expectations can come great movements.

The right is not completely defeated. They won some victories, and are regrouping around new forms, like Perot's "United We Stand America" and the "Christian Coalition." The road ahead will be full of new racist, anti-Communist attacks coming from the right wing.

Without mass pressure, Clinton's tendency will be to create a more moderate, Democratic version of Reaganomics - this is what his "New Democratic Party" is all about. His proposal to spend no more than \$20 billion to meet human needs and stimulate the economy might be a good program for rebuilding a couple of states, but for the nation it's a drop in the bucket.

The problems the country faces are long-term and systemic. The crisis is deep; the human suffering is intolerable. If Clinton fails to come through there will be a lot of disappointment and frustration among some, and anger and militancy among others. There could be a major explosion in the country - without a doubt, there will be struggle.

REAL FAILURE OF THE DEMOCRATS ■ Communists' starting point in looking at these elections is that there is a multi-racial, democratic, progressive majority in our country. They are mostly working and middle class people whose belief in democracy is shaped by their experience as working people under this capitalist system. Pro-corporate policies are not their main interest. This majority will respond when the program is pro-people, pro-jobs, pro-equality and pro-peace.

The failure of the Democrats is not that they are too left but that they have failed to counter the right wing with a strong progressive response to the people's needs. That has made them unable to win the confidence and votes of that majority. This failure is at the bottom of the trend towards lower and lower voter turnouts. The defeat of Bush and the right wing shows that people can change things.

If the Democrats won't respond, the people will increasingly choose political independence over the two-party system. A healthy starting point in any progressive political outlook must be confidence in the multi-racial working class and people.

THE GREAT FORCE OF THE PEOPLE ■ At the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation outlawing slavery, Abraham Lincoln made a very revealing admission. He said, "I confess, it is not I who have controlled events but events that have controlled me." The great force of the people throughout history has been the determining factor in controlling events. This does not mean that victories are guaranteed. It does mean that ultimately, the people in motion are more powerful than even the most formidable political leaders. □

On Political Independence And Third Parties

Si Gerson

Reviewing the election returns after a full month, some positive results are clear cut: the Bush Administration was soundly defeated; the ultra right was generally isolated and the central issues of the day – the economic recession and the demand for a universal health plan – are clearly in the foreground.

Further, new forces for progress have entered the fray. The Congressional Black Caucus, the most advanced grouping in the House of Representatives, increased its membership from 26 to 39 members, a 50 percent rise. The Hispanic Caucus swelled from 10 to 19, not only strengthening it numerically but also widening its regional scope.

Of the 110 new House members, 24 are women, bringing the total of women in the House to 48. Of these there will be nine African American women, a rise from four in the last Congress. But more significant and, yes, historic is the fact that the five come from Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Texas. All are seasoned state legislators with plenty of political savvy and will hardly be awestruck by their new surroundings. The women from Florida, Georgia and North Carolina are the first Black women to ever represent their states.

In the Senate, new history was made when Carol Moseley Braun was sworn in as Senator from Illinois, the first African American woman ever to be elected to that body and the first African American Senator since Massachusetts Republican Edward Brooke was defeated in 1978.

The growth in both the Black and Hispanic caucuses makes for an effective Black/Brown coalition supporting the Civil Rights Acts of 1990 and 1991 as well as bilingual voting rights and similar legislation. With substantial support from progressive women, the total grouping should be a formidable bloc that can command respect from the House leadership and the Oval Office.

BUCKING THE MACHINES ▣ These gains were not easily come by. In some cases those elected – the

new Black and Hispanic caucus members, all Democrats – had to buck the dominant political machines. Sen. Braun, for example, went through a tough primary against the incumbent Sen. Alan Dixon to win the Democratic nomination. Many of the newly elected found that they could not rely on the old party apparatus and had to create, in one form or another, independent structures to advance their campaigns.

These, of course, were struggles *within* the old parties on a local level. Can they be replicated on a national scale? That's a question being debated in progressive circles today, especially by those seeking to build a third party that can effectively challenge the two old parties.

Few progressives view the campaign of billionaire H. Ross Perot as exemplary, except for one point: the fact that he got 19 million votes – nearly one in five voters who cast ballots – demonstrates mass disgust for the two major parties. Perot did not gain those votes because of a coherent program. He simply became the catchbasin for the votes of the millions disillusioned with the old parties, particularly with their failure to deal with the recession and the crucial issue of jobs. But what the Perot vote did prove was that the major parties are vulnerable. Thus, in an oblique way, the Perot campaign stimulated discussion about a third party.

THIRD PARTY STIRRINGS ▣ The usual third parties (Libertarian, Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party, etc.) fared poorly in the presidential elections. All of them combined got fewer than 700,000 votes, or less than 1 percent of the total vote cast. Libertarian Party candidate Andre Marrou led the group with 289,719. Lenora Fulani, the New Alliance Party candidate, spent \$4,009,843, according to Federal Election Commission records as of Nov. 10, of which nearly \$2 million came from the FEC as matching funds. The result, as reported by Ballot Access News (12/10/92), was 75,901 votes (in 40 states), a sharp drop from her 1988 vote of about 217,000 (in 50 states).

Third party stirrings began to develop long before the elections. A leading factor in this move-

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ment is Labor Party Advocates (LPA), headed by Tony Mazzochi, a long-time officer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW). Mazzochi, speaking on Bill Moyers' program "Listening to America," aired over Public Broadcast System stations in October, indicated his group's cautious strategy. He said: "The only way to make professional politicians deal with the issues that really matter to people is to create a non-electoral party that wouldn't have to run candidates, not at least until they had a reasonable chance of winning. But it could agitate for a new social, political, and economic agenda for working people. Labor Party Advocates is organizing that kind of party, building grassroots support for an alternative to politics as usual."

Mazzochi concedes that there are differences between the Democrats and Republicans. "But," he emphasizes, "in the long run, only an independent party of working people can be counted on to protect our unions and guarantee a secure economic future for ourselves and our children."

As culled from Mazzochi's speeches and the LPA newsletters, Labor Party Advocates appreciates the reality that many unions have ties with the Democratic Party. It does not seek to disrupt these, as indicated by a question and answer column in a recent LPA newsletter:

Q: Will Labor Party Advocates run candidates?

A: No. Labor Party Advocates is strictly non-electoral. It will neither run candidates nor endorse candidates, and it will not interfere with the on-going activities of our unions and community organization. But Labor Party Advocates will agitate for an alternative, more worker-oriented political agenda, and it will mobilize support for a Labor Party.

Q: When will Labor Party Advocates actually start a Labor Party?

A: When there are thousands and thousands of Labor Party Advocates, a party can be organized with a platform developed by its own members. And when the Party has a realistic chance of winning an election, it can nominate candidates from its own ranks who can be truly accountable to working people.

Labor Party Advocates has been polling unions throughout the nation with remarkable results. More than 50 percent of unionists polled emphatically declare their low opinion of the two old parties and their desire for a party of labor. However, Mazzochi and other LPA activists have run into workers who still have faith in the Democratic Party. To

them Mazzochi says: "To be sure, there are those who think the Democratic Party has enough life left in it – or an overpowering enough instinct for self-preservation – that it will redeem itself. They too should support Labor Party Advocates. Organizing Labor Party Advocates is not going to retard the rebirth of the Democrats. On the contrary, it will encourage it.... If it does nothing else, Labor Party Advocates will help get their attention."

DEBATE ON THE LEFT ■ But Labor Party Advocates is not the only organization in the field. The National Organization for Women (NOW) last year organized a commission to study the problem and finally came up with the idea of helping form the 21st Century Party. Many of its positions are similar to those of other progressive groups, with a special emphasis on the problems of women. NOW has also set up its own Political Action Committee and has donated funds to women candidates' campaigns.

Another organization, termed at least temporarily as the New Party, has entered the field with a sophisticated tactical approach. A debate was set off in the columns of *The Nation*, the liberal weekly, by a July 20/27 article titled, "Out With the Old Politics, In With the New Party" written by Sandy Pope, who is listed as former executive director of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and Joel Rogers, a contributing editor of *The Nation* who teaches at the University of Wisconsin.

Their position is blunt, attacking the "two business dominated parties ... overrun by capital intensive campaigners accountable to no one but themselves and their personal network of funders.... Ideologically, they are exceptionally uncomfortable even talking about, much less addressing the needs of (dare we say it) the working class – defined here simply as the 80 percent of the work force that are production and non-supervisory employees."

Speaking to those who want to operate only inside the Democratic Party, the authors go on: "Our parties basically stink, but we can't reinvent them operating only from within. We need an organized alternative from without – something new and different and genuinely popular and democratic ... that forces the old parties to shape up. But conventional wisdom, backed by a lot of evidence from history, suggests we can't get that. There are all sort of structural barriers to a new party's emergence – like the absence of proportional representation in our 'winner-take-all' single-member district election system (and) ... the corruption of the financing system."

They call for locally based organizations with considerable autonomy, combining campaign work with cultural and educational activity and support for non-electoral organizations. "It should respect the non-party organizations on which any democratic party needs to draw," and goes on: "It should be the party of labor but not just a labor party, a party of environmentalists but not just a green party, a party of racial pluralism and justice but not just a Black or Latino party, a party of feminists but not just a feminist party."

START LOCAL, RUN TO WIN ■ On the problem of restrictive electoral laws, which the authors charge are "worse than a century ago," they call for boldly challenging them. And speaking of the bugbear of all third party efforts, the "wasted vote" syndrome, they suggest an answer. "The only solution is the simplest," they write. "Only run our candidates where we can win. Where we cannot win, we will simply abstain or, where the law permits, endorse on our own party line the most progressive major-party candidates we can find (with their permission, of course)." They point out that that was done in the 19th century and by the American Labor Party in New York during the 1930s.

And they exhort: "Start local. Think long-term. Combine non-electoral work with campaigns." They conclude on the knotty problem of the Democratic Party:

"Another strategy is to work only within the Democratic Party. Our views on that are complicated. We recognize the Democratic Party as the large unhappy home of a lot of very good people and we don't intend to build the New Party in a way that hurts progressive Democrats. But we also think working only inside that party is hopeless, as organized labor's generations-long alliance with the Democrats, and countless unsuccessful efforts at internal reform, attest."

The article evoked a spate of comments in *The Nation* of 10/12/92. Sen. Paul Wellstone, a progressive Democrat from Minnesota, dissented gently:

"New or third parties have historically been an important source of new ideas and strategies for social change. While these efforts are critical, I also believe that we can effectively do what they want with a progressive grassroots effort within the Democratic Party.... A revitalization of the Democratic Party from the ground up should be the real task of progressive leaders in the next decade."

His practical suggestions: expand voter registra-

tion; recruit and cultivate new leaders; listen more attentively to those within the ranks framing new questions and join with coalition partners with whom one does not always agree. He said that he was working with party leaders in the state to build the Wellstone Alliance along those lines.

Rep. Major Owens (D-NY) commented favorably on the Pope-Rogers article. But he carefully quoted the article's proviso to start locally and the injunction, "Don't waste people's votes or act as spoilers."

Jan Pierce, a Communication Workers of America officer, strongly agrees with the article's emphasis on grassroots activity and goes on: "The New Party's approach is one that makes sense for people who are part of institutions like unions that must be involved with the Democratic Party, even while we try to create alternatives to it wherever necessary and possible. Union members are certainly fed up with the continual betrayal of their interests by phony 'friends of labor.' But most working-class voters - like others who still bother to vote - are reluctant to throw ballots away on what appear to be hopeless 'fringe' candidates."

FROM THE BOTTOM UP ■ Pierce is negative on presidential tickets and strongly supports organizing from the bottom up - starting small by "electoral challenges at state, county and municipal levels." He adds: "Progressive constituencies disaffected from the Democrats can best be mobilized in a contest that's local rather than national." Joint electoral campaigns at a grassroots level with women, environmentalists, minorities and unionists, he argues, "could overcome the fragmentation of single-issue politics."

Pierce praises the work of socialist congressman Bernie Sanders and his supporters in Vermont, and adds that even by threatening to abandon fickle politicians, "you get their attention." He cited the tactic of the CWA in lining up 15 of their members in New Jersey to run as independent labor candidates for State Assembly against incumbents. The strategy worked. "They quickly became much more interested in finding ways to avert the wage freeze," he wrote.

Ellen David Friedman of the Vermont Progressive Alliance notes the growth of people's power in her state as an example of the validity of grassroots activity. They have been working in this way for the last twenty years, she writes, and the results have been an unbroken succession of victories in Burling-

ton, the state's largest city, from the day Bernie Sanders first won the mayoralty; the election of two independent progressives to the state legislature; progressive victories in three other municipalities; and the fielding of 15 independent progressives as candidates for State House and Senate seats. The statewide progressive electoral organization "is on its way to becoming a major party," she concludes.

Besides Sen. Wellstone's dissent, there were others who had doubts about the Pope-Rogers thesis. Prof. Theodore J. Lowi of Cornell argued that the authors "position the party too much on one side of the spectrum.... It is my strong conviction that a party founded on social democratic principles in the United States will go the way of all other previous so-called third parties. The Perot phenomenon and recent polls indicate that the real constituency for a new party is the broad and disgusted middle, and their program is reform.... A proper approach to the disgusted and radicalized middle will pick up ample components of the working class, without the point-by-point appeal with policy positions." Exactly how the professor would "pick up ample components of the working class" without setting forth some positions is unclear. All one gets finally is that he has formed a new party called the Independence Party "oriented towards the radical middle, and we are looking towards the 1994 Congressional elections to make our first showing."

LOVE-HATE WITH DEMOCRATS ■ The above is, of course, only a small sampling of thinking among left and progressive people. One thing is fairly obvious: most workers and liberal-minded people who are serious about progressive politics increasingly accept the proposition that the start must be made at the grassroots. National parties "built" from the top down are generally hothouse products that wilt fast. That which is built in struggle around the needs of the people based on close contact with the people can and do become effective organizations. Vermont, despite its small size and somewhat unique character, carries lessons to the whole progressive movement.

One other point emerges fairly clearly both in surveys by Labor Party Advocates and general experience of progressive political activists – the relationship of organized labor and the African American and Latino communities to the Democratic Party. It is often something of a love-hate relationship and far too complex to analyze in a few paragraphs. Suffice it to say at this point that all the

members of the Congressional Black Caucus, *save* one, ran as Democrats. Ditto the Latino Caucus. And similarly with the four new women senators – Carol Moseley Braun of Illinois, Patty Murray of Washington, Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein of California.

Notwithstanding the fact that most progressive Democrats know full well that both major parties, Republican and Democrat, are controlled by the major corporate powers, they still feel it necessary to use the Democratic Party as a political vehicle. That is a matter to be explored further, but it helps explain why a coalition policy – call it cross-endorsement of the kind done so effectively by the American Labor Party in New York, or something else – is an essential element of practical politics at one stage of the development of a third party.

This is the general outlook of the AFL-CIO's COPE (Committee on Political Education) which indicates support for pro-labor candidates and whose PACs (Political Action Committees) of the various unions help fund the campaigns of chosen candidates and provide other forms of support (phone banks, canvassing, issuing campaign material, etc.). A signal example of this type of work was shown by the yeoman backing given Democratic Senatorial candidate Harrison Wofford in Pennsylvania last year in his upset victory over Republican candidate Richard Thornburgh, in which Wofford stressed the issue of the need for a universal health system.

Such COPE activity is widespread. While still basically backing the Democratic Party, trade unions are displaying increasing political independence. One such example was shown in Southwest Virginia, where the United Mine Workers ran members as candidates for local office in six counties. As a result they elected from their ranks two sheriffs, two county clerks and two county treasurers. Such independent activity can be expected to be seen more frequently in the period ahead.

THE COMMUNIST VIEW ■ Except for some of the most hidebound sectarians, most people on the left have supported the concept of a broad third party – hopefully labor-led in alliance with the Black and Latino communities and the surging women's movement – that will effectively challenge the two old parties. From the early twenties the Communist Party called for the formation of a labor party and got such resolutions adopted in scores of local unions and other labor bodies. Down the years this

slogan was expanded into a concept that included workers, farmers, small business people, academics and professionals – in short, a multi-racial party of the victims of monopoly capital. It was made clear on many occasions that the Communist Party sees such a broad party as an inclusive political organization of electoral struggle against the two corporate-controlled old parties, and operating within the framework of the present social order while seeking wide structural change.

During the 1948 presidential campaign of Henry A. Wallace, heading the Progressive Party ticket, there was systematic redbaiting of Wallace and his associates. The Communist Party was called upon to define the differences. It did so in a statement published in the *New York Times* of July 19, 1948 and cited by Prof. Curtis D. MacDougal in his three-volume *Gideon's Army*, (1965, New York, p. 267), the definitive history of that campaign and the Progressive Party.

The Communist statement:

The Wallace movement is by its very nature a great coalition of workers, farmers, Negro people, professional and small business people. The new party is anti-monopoly, anti-fascist and anti-war. It is not by its very nature a socialist or communist party and we are not seeking to make it one. There is only one Marxist party in America and this is it, the Communist Party. Any effort to exclude socialist-minded people from contributing their efforts to the new party movement stems from those who are seeking to disrupt the third party movement.

Re-reading it nearly a half century later, this still is a basically correct view and may be helpful in this period of wide discussion and rise of independent

political action. It reflects the general outlook of the Communist Party: to work with other forces and particularly labor and oppressed people in building a broad electoral movement on a common platform, while maintaining its independent position and advancing its own program.

This policy was brilliantly demonstrated in the New York City elections when two Communists, Peter V. Cacchione and Benjamin J. Davis, were elected to the City Council in 1941 and 1943, respectively. Both were elected and re-elected under the system of proportional representation. The party was an informal – though widely recognized – part of a broad coalition backing Fiorello LaGuardia for mayor along with most of his slate on the American Labor Party line.

In later years and in varied forms the CPUSA has continued to apply this policy to its electoral work. In the 1992 elections, Communists ran a number of candidates for local office and in one place for Congress on a variety of tickets, while giving firm support to the anti-Bush, anti-Perot movement. In some places they were part of "Tax the Rich" coalitions and in one instance, that of John Rummel in New Jersey, ran under the Communist Party line.

This broad policy has shown its worth and is developing growing support, because the Communists advance the burning issues of the day – the fight for jobs, for a national health program and the battle against racism. It was and is a principled yet flexible policy line that, combined with mass struggle outside the parliamentary arena, advances the struggle for a labor-led, multi-racial third party that can effectively challenge the present corporate-controlled two-party system. □

Economic Struggles And The Communist Party

Judith LeBlanc

The new political situation in the country is exciting and bursting with new possibilities for the working-class and people's movements. With the defeat of George Bush, the new moment brings hope to tens of millions, mercilessly victimized by 12 years of reactionary rule and trickle down economics.

At the same time, there are dangers, for the economic and social crisis buffeting the country is unremitting and devastating. In fact, many Americans – Black, Brown and white – find themselves literally in life or death situations. Additional tens of millions are locked in a permanent state of joblessness, homelessness, and hunger. And unless emergency action is taken now by the new administration, even more casualties of the worldwide capitalist economic crisis will join this civilian army of the ill-housed, ill-fed and ill-clothed.

It is against this background of great promise and dire need that the main tasks of the period ahead come into sharp focus: to organize a mass struggle in urban, suburban, and rural America for immediate relief and radical solutions to the deep-going crisis eroding every sector of the U.S. economy.

This, not the government deficit, not workers' productivity, not new consumption-based taxes, is the mandate of the 1992 elections. About this there should be no confusion.

NEW POLITICAL SITUATION ■ The basis of a people's economic offensive springs from the compelling needs of the the victims of the economic downturn and the new trends in the working class and people's movements which have taken root over the past decade. In the 1992 election campaign these trends manifested themselves in a particularly striking way and reached a new level. What are some of these new trends?

1) A broad people's front emerged in a new way in the course of the 1992 election campaign. This front

was the decisive element in the defeat of Bush and the ultra-right in November. Moreover, it is the political springboard for effecting a radical change in the living conditions of millions in the coming year. No single component, including labor (although labor participation is decisive), is capable by itself of curbing the power of the transnational corporations in the legislative arena or at the collective bargaining table. Of course, new tactical difficulties will surface in this new situation. Already apparent is a "wait and see" attitude towards the Clinton administration and Congress among some of the leadership of the people's organizations.

2) In recent years there has been a marked change in the outlook of millions with regard to the health and long-term prospects of the U.S. economy. The protracted character of the economic crisis, which arguably began in the late 1960s or early 1970s, is forcing many to look at capitalism, as an economic system, in a new way. For millions, the crisis is not seen as solely, or even primarily, cyclical in nature. Nor are many people convinced that, despite new claims by economic statisticians, the recession ended several months ago and an economic rebound is now underway. Rather, the view is that U.S. capitalism is in a much deeper crisis, a crisis which is different than any previous crisis of the postwar period.

We are living in a new economic era. It is not an era of growth, but of economic slowdown and stagnation. It is not an era of surging private and public investment, but of downsizing of the nation's industrial base and neglect of its infrastructure. It is not an era of rising incomes, but of shrinking paychecks or no paychecks at all. It is not an era of full – or even close to full – employment, but of mounting unemployment, spreading homelessness and hunger, and increasing discrimination and racism.

The economic crisis is long-term and interlocking. It is more like a cancer eating away at the body's vital organs than a common cold. And like a cancer, it will not be cured by letting nature run its course. On the contrary, radical economic surgery is needed – and needed immediately. The roots of this

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crisis are systemic. That is, they are comprehensive, long-lasting and motored by capitalism's insatiable urge for higher and higher corporate profits, for maximum profits.

While none of this precludes a pick-up in production and employment, these economic spurts, increasing numbers of Americans believe, will occur in an overall framework of economic decline and contraction. And for many this lesson was learned the hard way.

Consider the following: 20 million are unemployed or underemployed; 30 million people, including an unconscionable number of children, are languishing in poverty. This is an increase of more than two percent from a decade earlier; wages have stagnated for 20 years and for some segments of the workforce take-home pay has dropped precipitously. Workers with only four years of high school, for instance, saw their real wages fall by 9.8 percent in the 1980s, while the real earnings of high school dropouts plunged 17.3 percent during the same period; and the working poor, scraping to make ends meet, increased from 12 to 18 percent of the workforce during the past decade.

And this crisis falls disproportionately on racially and nationally oppressed and women workers. Many of the gains won through struggle in the 1970s have been wiped out as plant closings, new technologies, and corporate outsourcing have decimated the manufacturing base of our nation's largest cities where a majority of these groups live.

It is this chilling reality that underlies the new thinking of millions of ordinary people with respect to the current status and long term future of the U.S. economy. Perhaps nothing better typifies this shift in thought patterns than the frequently spoken parental concern over whether the next generation will enjoy a standard of living comparable to theirs.

Furthermore, Bill Clinton's election, while widely greeted, has not eased—at least in any dramatic way—the grave concern over the immediate or long-term economic prospects. Indeed, the recent announcements of layoffs by such big corporations as General Motors and IBM, and the less than full commitment of the Clinton transition team to addressing some of the most urgent problems, like homelessness and hunger, only increases the anxiety which many deeply feel.

3) Many illusions have been shattered about the two-party system. The growing movement towards independent political action in the electoral and leg-

islative arena is reaching a new level. More and more people are reluctant to "let the White House and Congress take care of the nation's business". Behind this is the attitude that the political process is not the exclusive domain of the politicians of either the Democratic or Republican parties. And for some, particularly in the labor and women's movement, efforts to organize third party formations are underway.

4) New attitudes are evident with respect to the concept of democracy. On the one hand, the corruption associated with the S&L scandal, the new revelations on Irangate, the passport searches of Clinton and Perot by the Justice Department have jaded the popular view of capitalist democracy. On the other hand, the long term character of the economic and social crisis has convinced many that the right to a job, home, education and health care are legitimate and necessary objectives of governmental action. In short, the concept of democracy is more based on the class realities of our society.

5) Mass thought patterns have changed for the better in terms of the struggle against racism. A majority of the American people and significantly more white people are rejecting, at least, the most extreme forms of racism and racist violence. This, combined with a growing consciousness of the necessity for unity in today's struggles, brings to the fore new opportunities in the fight for equality.

6) The decline of anti-communism and changing attitudes concerning the status of women, abortion, and the family are apparent as well. This was dramatically demonstrated by the the negative public reaction to the Republican Party Convention ultra-right fest and the rapid retreat from redbaiting by the Bush campaign. The convention spectacle in Houston was, nearly everyone now agrees, a major miscalculation of the Bush campaign committee. Many undecided voters bid farewell to Bush's reelection by the close of the convention.

NEW TASKS IN POST ELECTION PERIOD ■ These new thought patterns and the ongoing economic crisis are the foundation on which to broaden and deepen the all-people's front. This front has been relatively dormant since the election in November. But this political posture is momentary. It will give way to political initiatives and action as we slide into the new year.

Thus, the million dollar question is: What is called for in terms of demands, slogans, and forms of struggle to stimulate broad united front actions? What is to be done to reverse the damage of 12 years of right wing rule?

At this moment a starting point is mass struggle, particularly at the local level. Initiatives are not yet coming from the center forces. This is always a problem with center forces, but it is compounded by the fact that a Democratic administration occupies the White House. And many leaders of people's organizations are of the opinion that the new administration must have some space and time to act. Not so for the Fortune 500 and Wall Street which has no such hesitations about forcefully expressing their views to the President-elect.

IMMEDIATE ACTION ■ But biding time is not the sentiment at the grassroots. Immediate action on the economic issues is the key link to moving the whole chain of class and social struggle ahead in the coming period. The people expect it. They want solutions to the crisis of everyday living. They want to fight.

Without the mass mobilization of a united multi-racial, multi-national working class led front in the workplace and community, any talk of mounting an effective fight against the corporations – not to mention the winning of an anti-monopoly government and socialism – is empty and idle chatter. While the tactics of mass mobilization will be different than, say, if Bush had been elected, the strength and pressure of the grassroots has to be brought to bear on the new administration and Congress. Honeymoons are for newlyweds, but not for the victims of the economic crisis.

Just as grassroots organization and mobilization was decisive during the Roosevelt years, it is also necessary at this moment. Otherwise, a "better business climate" and deficit reduction measures could easily come to dominate the legislative agenda in the first 100 days. That would be a disaster.

No one should forget that New Deal legislation did not even begin to see the light of day until the great mass demonstrations and militant actions in the nation's capital and in big cities and small towns throughout the country took place. Unemployment insurance was won by the unemployed and their allies in the streets, and the same can be said about the other economic reforms enacted during that era.

OLD-FASHIONED MILITANCY ■ A more militant spirit

is also needed on every picketline and at every demonstration. Those who rule will take note when the workers and people up the ante in terms of militant tactics. The struggles of the last decade show that the people are ready for more militant ways of expressing their anger over the desperate economic circumstances in which they find themselves. One distinguishing feature of the 1930s was its militancy. Nearly everyone now acknowledges that what broke the open shop not only in auto, but in basic industry generally, was the Flint sitdown strike. You can't get much more militant than that, but it is also true that anything less would not have won the UAW union recognition at GM. Will less militant tactics break the economic gridlock today? It's extremely doubtful.

Finally, new, more radical solutions are absolutely necessary. Take, for example, the issue of unemployment. Certainly, discredited supply-side and trickle down economics will not solve the problem of joblessness. It didn't work ten years ago and there is less reason to think that it will work today. Despite all the hoopla surrounding the "economic expansion" during the Reagan years, job growth during that period, according to Business Week, "at 2 percent a year, was less than the 2.5 percent of the 1970s and the 2.7 percent pace of the 1960s." The editors of Business Week go on to say, "And the unemployment rate reached 10.8 percent during the 1981-1982 recession, the worst rate since the 1930s. Little wonder the average jobless rate in the 1980s was higher than in the previous two decades." (Business Week, Reinventing America, 1992)

If they had wished, the Business Week editors could have added that the so-called Reagan job machine was overwhelmingly in the low wage segment of the labor market and the pool of long term and even permanently unemployed increased substantially.

AN ANSWER TO THE JOBLESS CRISIS ■ So, if experience is any guide, then it is foolhardy to rely on a modified version of trickle down economics or a "profit driven" recovery to solve the problem of joblessness. It won't work even with other measures like public infrastructure investment or more spending on job training.

What then is the solution to joblessness?

A jobs program in today's circumstances must combine immediate with longer term measures. It must create new jobs and preserve existing jobs, particularly in the industrial sphere. Manufacturing

still accounts for millions of jobs, generates billions of dollars in wages, and undergirds the overall economic health of the economy. A jobs program also must contain concrete affirmative action goals in view of the uneven and more injurious impact of the economic crisis on racially and nationally oppressed people and women. Working-class and broader all-people's unity hinges on this. Lastly, a full employment program must embody radical proposals such as shorter hours, curbs on capital mobility at home and abroad, and massive public works.

While support for an overall program would have to be won in the arena of public opinion, the sentiment for public works and infrastructure spending is supported by broad sections of the people. In fact, the contentious issue is not whether such a program is necessary, but the scope of it.

Obviously, a far reaching program is not favored by any segment of business, not only because it would be too costly, but it would also strengthen labor's hand at the expense of the corporations all along the line. The club of unemployment was the main instrument which corporate bosses wielded in the 1980s to discipline and squeeze wage and benefit concessions from workers at the collective bargaining table and to intensify labor at the point of production. It seems clear now that no segment of big business wants to return to days when unemployment hovered around four percent. They prefer a much larger army of unemployed, but that should not deter the unemployed and their allies from fighting for a radical, anti-corporate jobs program.

Similar anti-crisis measures are also needed on an emergency basis in housing, medical care, food, nutrition, etc. And like the jobs program outlined above, the funding must come from the corporations, the wealthy, and the Pentagon. This is the only basis for broad unity. Anything else will be disunifying and fragment the movement internally.

ROLE OF COMMUNISTS & OTHER MILITANTS ■ The politics of the 1980's and 1990's have been profoundly influenced by the ultra-right domination of the nation's political life. Even though the people's expectations are high now, the initial demands coming forward, for example a \$60 billion jobs and infrastructure program, are excessively modest. This cannot be explained by current political and economic realities. To the contrary, it is tainted, and decidedly so, by the political atmosphere of the Reagan-Bush years.

During that time, the political balance of forces was weighted in favor of monopoly and, as a consequence, the working-class and people's movement were on the defensive. In the labor movement, for instance, the past decade was a holding action as workers fought, unsuccessfully at times, to keep what they had won in an earlier period. Much the same could be said about other sections of the people's movement.

But that was yesterday, and today conditions are different in many ways. The political discourse in terms of the programmatic solutions which are now seeing the light of day lags behind the current realities. It does not reflect the new political situation. Even among some of the more militant forces in the broad anti-Bush coalition this is the case.

What then is the task of the left in these circumstances? When faced with a similar situation, Lenin, the leader of the Russian revolution, called on the militant workers of Russia to "sweep aside these survivals of obsolete and lifeless views", but he quickly added that their political activity,

should not be reduced to mere rejection of old errors, but, what is incomparably more important, it should take the form of constructive revolutionary work towards fulfilling the new tasks, towards attracting into our Party and utilizing the new forces that are now coming into the revolutionary field in such vast masses. (*New Tasks and New Forces*, Vol. 8)

Admittedly a "revolutionary field" does not yet exist but such a situation is not so far into the future, as some on the left so insistently claim, that it is idle talk to even mention it. Such a pessimistic view is hopelessly lacking in revolutionary dialectics and betrays any appreciation of the nature of the current crisis of capitalism. It is the rationale for those who are making their peace, however quietly, with this monstrous system of capitalist exploitation.

What does exist at the present moment is a qualitatively new situation, full of new opportunities for struggle. Some of its most distinctive features include a new stage of economic crisis; the appearance on the terrain of struggle of old and new forces who have been tempered by the struggles of the 1980s; the assumption by the working class and its organized sector of a larger role in the people's struggles; a higher level of political consciousness and class and people's unity; and the emergence of new tasks corresponding to the new conditions which have evolved over the course of a decade.

And, like in Russia at the beginning of this cen-

tury, the responsibility falling on the Party and militant activists, nearly 90 years later and in the most advanced capitalist country in the world, is to do "constructive revolutionary work."

AT THE GRASSROOTS ■ At the center of "constructive revolutionary work" is involvement in mass struggles at the grassroots. The Party's role at the grassroots flows from its policies of working class concentration and its understanding of the role of working class.

Particularly important at this time is concrete participation in the ongoing struggles against joblessness, homelessness, and hunger. This has to be a point of departure for every Communist and militant activist. Monday morning quarterbacks, even the most prescient, are a dime a dozen.

This is what separates those who have a left analysis, but spend an inordinate amount of time acting as if history has assigned them the responsibility of officiating at a solemn wake for the Communist movement, from those who tirelessly struggle to build the movement against the economic crisis and for socialism.

Another aspect of the work of Communists is to explain the nature of the economic crisis. That is a two-sided task. On the one hand, wrong ideas in popular thinking have to be challenged and undone. And on the other hand, fresh and convincing explanations of the causes of the crisis and fundamental solutions to it, including socialism, have to be introduced. This doesn't in the least preclude the call for immediate reforms to stem the human damage of the economic crisis. In fact, any separation of the two, wittingly or unwittingly, can only do great harm to the struggle against the economic crisis.

A challenge for the Party is to show the linkage between immediate relief measures from the systemic crisis and longer term solutions, to combine the most pressing concerns of the people with the struggle for higher levels of class and socialist consciousness. This was a historic and necessary contribution of Communists and the left in earlier crises. This Communist plus is no less necessary in today's conditions. According to Gus Hall, the Chair of the Communist Party, USA,

our most important and unique contribution ... must be to explain in the most basic and simple ways how and why the problems the people face are ultimately the result of the capitalist system, the exploitation, racism and oppression ... The plus gives industrial concentration a deeper meaning. With-

out the plus we can be involved in mass work all our lives and never recruit anyone. The Party can grow only on the basis of the influence of the plus. The plus must be a factor in our plan of work. The objective situation is now more open for our plus.

And we could add that the working class and people need the Communist plus if they are to advance in the present situation.

UNITY: KEY TO VICTORY ■ The struggle for unity is a permanent task of Communists and other militant fighters. Nothing is more important than unity in struggle. The simple fact, corroborated a thousand times over in daily life, is that corporate power cannot be curbed without broad class and people's unity. It was unity that resulted in the New Deal legislation in the 1930s; it was unity that made possible the passage of civil right laws in the 1960s; it was unity that forced U.S. imperialism to leave Vietnam in the 1970s; it was unity that forced the Reagan administration to move back from the brink of nuclear conflagration; it was unity that defeated George Bush in the recent election; and it will be broad working-class, multi-racial, and all-peoples' unity which will make the difference in the economic struggles ahead.

At the present moment, the interests of diverse sections of the population intersect in the struggle against the economic crisis. Even some sections of business see the need for a change in economic policy from that of the two previous administrations. Of course, their views and recommendations will be quite different from that of the many other elements making up this broad movement. Nevertheless, these divisions among business leaders create political openings and should be utilized. This will take skill as well as flexible methods of work. For example, the May 16th Save Our Cities demonstration was supported by labor and community groups as well as elected officials. It also included corporate sponsors. As big as it was it could have been bigger if the strategy and tactics had taken sufficiently into account the great breadth of the action. Nor was there, we might add, an appreciation of the special role of the labor movement.

Of course, at the center of the struggle for broader people's unity is the struggle for working-class, Black-Brown-white, and male-female unity. The Communist Party and the left must take the lead in unifying these decisive forces for mass action. As the struggle intensifies further, divisive

tactics coming from the corporate suites can be expected. Racism, male supremacy, and other forms of chauvinist ideology will be utilized to weaken the broad front for jobs and equality. For our Party and for all concerned about the future of our nation, finding ways to overcome in a timely way the numerous roadblocks which will inevitably arise is critical.

Finally, a pre-eminent task is to build a bigger Communist Party and consolidate the left. The two are not mutually exclusive, but intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Meeting the current challenges in the economic arena requires a bigger Party and organization of the broad left sector in the working class and people's movements. History demonstrates this fact. In the 1930s, for example, the mass character of the Party and the left contributed greatly, and in some ways decisively, to the victories and historic breakthroughs during that period.

Moreover, objective conditions and mass thought patterns open up new avenues to attract new forces to our ranks.

ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES ■ New historic challenges, every bit as formidable and every bit as promising

as those faced by the generations of the 1930s, face the American people now. How these challenges are met will determine in large measure the quality of life of the next generation as well as this generation. Despite the complicated nature of the present moment, there is every reason for optimism about the future. The changes which have occurred over the past decade in people's thinking and the political landscape provide solid ground for a fresh and united people's offensive for economic security, equality and peace.

This is not a time for the fainthearted. It calls on every fighter for progress to roll up their sleeves, but be steadied by the conviction that new forces are marching to the drumbeat of struggle and are determined to reverse the political direction of the country. In another period long ago, an American patriot solemnly wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls."

That was in the midst of our nation's revolutionary and anti-colonial upheaval. This moment, different as it is from that period, will undoubtedly try our souls as well. But I'm confident that our class, people, and Party will meet this challenge.

Communists Face the Future

Gus Hall

Editors note: The following two pieces by Gus Hall, National Chairman of the Communist Party, USA, were originally presented to audiences abroad. The first is the text of Hall's speech to the delegates of the Communist Party of Portugal's 14th Congress that was held December 4-6, 1992. The second is an interview conducted by Mike Davidow, Moscow correspondent for the People's Weekly World, that appeared in the Russian newspaper, Sovetskaya Rossia.

Speech to CP Portugal Congress

I am honored to bring you the warmest comradely greetings of international solidarity on behalf of the Communist Party, USA, the U.S. working class and the American people, on the occasion of your Party's 14th Congress.

We bring you greetings from the land of classical imperialism, a nation of the highest rate of class exploitation, of extreme racism and racist violence, where women workers receive 60 percent of men's wages. For the past ten years the wages of all U.S. workers have been on a steady decline.

Ours is a country where capitalism has had all the advantages and very few of the disadvantages for a successful, flourishing capitalist system. But despite all the human and material resources, U.S. capitalism is now in a deep, protracted systemic crisis. The total \$5 trillion debt — government, corporate and personal — has transformed the United States from the world's biggest creditor nation to the world's biggest debtor.

Ours is a country that once had no homelessness, little hunger or poverty. Today, housing, food, education and medical care are out of reach for tens of millions. There are three million homeless Americans, 33 million who live below the poverty level and 30 million who are treated as second class citizens, under a brutal system of racial and national oppression and racist violence — who are discriminated against in jobs, housing and education. This

Gus Hall in National Chairman of the CPUSA.

includes two out of five children who go to bed hungry. Together with South Africa, the U.S. has the dubious distinction of denying any kind of government-provided health care to its people. There are almost 40 million Americans who have no medical coverage of any kind.

With the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the United States has proclaimed itself the world's only superpower. More than any other country in history, U.S. imperialism pursues a foreign policy of total nuclear, military and economic domination of the world. The cold war is over, but the U.S. nuclear-military buildup continues full speed. The cold war is over, but the U.S. policy of raw aggression against Cuba is in high gear.

Our Party has always been a staunch advocate of world Communist fraternity. We are active proponents of solidarity and the exchange of theory and practice between parties and working-class movements around the world. More than ever, the self-interests of the workers of the world call for sharing the varied and rich mixture of ideas and experiences, theory and practice, accumulated in many countries over many decades of struggle.

LET'S GATHER AND TALK ■ Permit me to take advantage of this opportunity to say to Communist fighters the world over, "Let us gather, talk and break bread together."

Gorbachev's so-called "new thinking" did not sink deep roots in our Party. The main reason is because in our country it is difficult to pretend that the class struggle has faded away; or, that the monopoly capitalist ruling class has transformed itself into a benevolent, charitable organization that has given up its insatiable drive for maximum corporate profits; or, that U.S. imperialism has given up its 75-year campaign to destroy socialism.

In an ever-more aggressive imperialist country like the United States today, reality tends to shatter the illusions that the opportunistic new thinking is based on.

Like many Communist and working-class parties around the world, our Party successfully defended its ideology and organizational principles

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from an attempt by right opportunists to take over and destroy it. At its 25th National Convention last year, our Party reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to a working-class, Marxist-Leninist revolutionary path – the path that sees the inevitability of socialism. We are convinced that this is the ultimate forward march of all societies. There is no way civilization can for long postpone or forever evade the socialist stage of its development. Capitalism has no long-term future.

On behalf of our Party and its leadership, we wish you a successful and fruitful Congress.

Interview in Sovietskaya Rossia

Gus Hall is recognized throughout the world as an outstanding Marxist-Leninist theoretician and a steadfast revolutionary leader in the international Communist movement. I have known and worked with him for more than half a century, and thus I am personally familiar with his many contributions to the struggle for peace and progress.

I attended the 25th National Convention of the Communist Party USA held Dec. 5-7 in Cleveland, Ohio, which, after a sharp struggle, resulted in the reaffirmation of Marxism-Leninism as the guiding principle for U.S. Communists. It was Hall's deep-going analysis of the revolutionary process in the world, in the USSR and former socialist countries of Eastern Europe, and in the U.S., that served as the basis for this important victory of Marxist-Leninists in the United States.

In June of this year I made a speaking tour of 11 cities in the United States, from New York to Los Angeles, and at the conclusion interviewed Gus Hall in the offices of the Party in its eight-story building in mid-Manhattan.

At 82, Hall looks and acts far younger than his age. If anything, the need for struggle to overcome the present crisis in the world Communist movement has led him to cast off the weight of his 65 years of struggle in the U.S. labor and Communist movement, eight of which were spent in prison during the McCarthy hysteria. The following are his responses to my questions.

– Mike Davidow

Q: How would you characterize the dissolution of the USSR and the collapse of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union?

A: I believe it is indeed the tragedy of the 20th Century. And as such, it calls for a profound, objective, critical and self-critical analysis, in the first place, by the Soviet Communists, of what led to this

tragedy – not only for the peoples of the former USSR, but for the progressive peoples of the world.

For seven decades the USSR constituted the bulwark for peace and progress, and after World War II, for the struggle to prevent nuclear disaster. It acted as a brake upon the aggressive designs and actions of the world and especially U.S. imperialism. That brake is now gone, with all the terrible dangers this implies. The unchallenged massive destruction of Iraq – the genocidal attack upon its peaceful people – would have been unthinkable without the collapse of the USSR under Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and Yeltsin. Or consider the unbridled efforts to destroy socialist Cuba.

Q: What is your estimate of the causes of this disaster?

A: That question is on the minds of millions, and not only Communists – how was it possible that the USSR could be dissolved and the CPSU destroyed? As I said, the Soviet comrades owe us the answer to that question in the first place, but I will express my views.

There are many reasons, but I believe the ultimate cause of the crisis in the socialist world and, above all, in the former USSR can be traced to the germination and mushrooming of the age-old virus of opportunism. Why did it spread and ultimately grow into a full-blown epidemic?

I believe it was, in the first place, because of the breakdown of the system of ideological immunities provided by the science of Marxism-Leninism. That breakdown took place over a long period of time, and with the proclamation of “new thinking” the virus spread like wildfire. What is “new thinking” stripped of its platitudinous proclamations? It has its source in the old concept that the class struggle “withered away” in the socialist countries, that there is no main contradiction between the classes and thus no class enemies or class struggle. It is based on the concept that universal human interests supersede and replace class interests. Earl Browder, our former general secretary, drew similar conclusions from the U.S.-Soviet alliance during World War II and dissolved our Party. The cold war quickly disposed of Browder's “theory.”

It is false and undialectical to counterpose universal and class interests. There is a dialectical relationship between the struggle to save humankind from nuclear disaster and the threat to our environment, and the continuation of the class struggle.

Only if you intellectually "eliminate" imperialism from the world scene – as have done Gorbachev, Yakovlev and Yeltsin – is this dialectical relationship removed. The problem is that it is only removed in their false reasoning and not in real life.

It is such opportunist theories and actions that have transformed the former Soviet Union from the stronghold of the forces for peace, national liberation and progress, into a "junior partner" of U.S. imperialism. Basically "new thinking" is nothing more than old right-wing social democracy. It was the right-wing social democratization of the CPSU, a process directed from the very top by Gorbachev and Yakovlev, that led to tearing the revolutionary heart out of the Party of Lenin. History, I believe, has never witnessed renegades on such a mass scale as afflicted the CPSU.

Q: What is your estimate of the role played by Mikhail Gorbachev?

A: Perhaps at the beginning there may have been some basis for uncertainty about the role of Gorbachev. But Gorbachev himself, particularly by his actions since the events of August 1991, has provided the clearest answer. It is all summed up in his book, *A Failed System*. All pretense of being a Communist has been discarded. It's an expose of Gorbachev's failure, rather than the failure of a system. Gorbachev's subsequent fundraising tour to the U.S., Japan and Germany can only be described as slimy betrayal without precedent. It was a debt collection tour to receive his payoff for perhaps the biggest sellout in history.

The U.S. ruling class is beside itself with joy. It spent five trillion dollars over the past seven decades trying to overthrow socialism and reduce the USSR to the status of a semi-colony. Gorbachev, Yakovlev and Yeltsin presented it all to them at bargain prices. When Gorbachev made his tour of the United States in a corporate tycoon's jet plane on which was emblazoned the words "Capitalist Tool," it was an apt description of his role.

But I believe the question still has to be answered: What made it possible for Gorbachev to play such a destructive role as general secretary of the CPSU and president of the USSR? I believe that what I said about opportunism, right-wing social democracy and "new thinking" have much to do with the answer.

Q: And how would you characterize the role of

Boris Yeltsin?

A: The roots are the same, only Yeltsin is a much cruder, boorish Gorbachev. I hope the peoples of Russia will understand my frankness. But it is difficult to fathom how such a brazen demagogue and leader of a forced march to primitive capitalism – literally making Russia into a semi-colony of U.S. imperialism – can remain president. There are few places in the modern world where a president can get away with such mass impoverishment of his people, such confiscation of their resources, such destruction of a great state, such disintegration of its armed forces, as we are witnessing in Russia and the former Soviet Republics today.

But I believe a people whose revolution created the ten days that shook the world, and saved humanity from the nightmare of fascism, will not too long put up with it. This is evidenced by the hundreds of thousands who have taken to the streets. It will not be in the exact form it had been, but with its essential features: planned economy, public ownership of the means of production, production for the common good with more genuine democracy – where workers of hand and brain, collective farmers, and those who choose to be family farmers constitute the real ruling power, not comprador capitalists and speculators.

I believe if the people of the United States faced anything like what the peoples of Russia and the former Soviet Republics confront today, there would arise a great patriotic movement. I believe, in their own way, based on their history, the peoples of Russia and the former Soviet Republics will create such a patriotic movement as they did with the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45. I believe it will inevitably have a socialist character. And for this great patriotic struggle, a united genuine Communist Party is needed, and will draw the necessary lessons from the great betrayal that has taken place.

Q: You have noted the international significance of these tragic events. What do you think of the need for a world conference of Communist parties?

A: I have said, and I want to stress this: such a conference is extremely urgent. No party, including ours, has been unaffected by the profound crisis in the world Communist movement, brought about particularly by the collapse of the USSR and CPSU.

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A View of Socialism: Revolution and Counter-revolution

Norman Markowitz

It was almost half a century ago that socialism was established in Eastern Europe, China, and North Korea. This occurred upon the ruins of the defeated German-Japanese Axis and its fascist collaborators in World War II. The Vietnamese war for socialism and national liberation began a new stage of national liberation movements around the globe. Now counter-revolutions have taken place in many of the former socialist countries, and the multifaceted ideology industry of world capitalism is proclaiming a "post-Communist" era.

At the same time, Marxist-Leninists are regrouping. This process is advancing in the United States, South Africa, several European countries and many other nations after the debacle of perestroika and the departure of "new voices" who followed Gorbachev in challenging the most basic Marxist-Leninist concepts within the Communist parties of the world. Marxist-Leninists are struggling to overcome the Reichstag fire style suspension of the Communist Party that followed the Yeltsin counter-coup in the then-USSR. And the effects of "savage capitalism" (even many anti-Communist intellectuals in Eastern Europe are coming to call it that) are beginning to produce a reaction – stiffening the resistance of workers and popular masses to anti-Communist regimes which are attempting to introduce capitalist market economies to eliminate socialism.¹

THE GREAT BETRAYAL ■ Gorbachev's betrayals and the crude dictatorial policies of Yeltsin have taken the bloom off the events of the last three years for all but the most cultic elements of the non- and anti-Communist left. Still, a number of very important questions remain: Has socialism failed as a system? If it has, in relation to what? What is the responsibility of the past for the crisis of the present? What is the ideological and explanatory significance of concepts like "Stalinism," "totalitarianism," "democracy," "revisionism," "right opportunism," "command economy," and "market socialism?" What should be the attitude of Marxist-Leninists, their

allies and all supporters of socialism toward the Soviet and international socialist past? How do we evaluate the present crisis of socialism and world trends?

As a beginning to formulating answers to these questions, I have constructed a historical outline. It attempts to show the major periods of development in the struggle to abolish capitalism and establish socialism – from the revolution of 1917 to the political counter-revolutions of 1989.² This outline is preliminary and invites discussion. It is an attempt to cover 70 years of extremely rich history in a very broad sweep. Inevitably, some people will disagree with many points and many will disagree with some. But the hope is that it will stimulate discussion that will bring greater understanding, and help point the way toward what must be done now and the future.

At the center of this outline is the understanding that the capitalist system has been the dominant economic system in the world – in fact, the only functioning world (as against regional) system. This is true even in light of the mass immiseration of the world's people that the capitalist system is responsible for.

Incidentally, this understanding of capitalism's dominant position is often tragically absent from the agitational and the scholarly work of both the mainstream Communist movement and its myriad of competitors on the left. The achievements of the now abandoned CMEA (the socialist Common Market), were substantial in transforming diverse and historically antagonistic nations and regions into a new economic community; but given its vastly inferior resource base, and the economic warfare practiced against it, CMEA was unable to prevent the penetration of "Western" capital and capitalist ideologies.

Two factors are central to understanding the limitations in socialist internationalism. First, the capitalist world had most of the Third World as a vast hinterland to exploit, taking no responsibility to provide jobs, housing and basic human needs. This was true even for the citizens of the developed capitalist countries, not to speak of the populations in

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the resource-rich "enterprise zones" of the neocolonies. Contrast this with the socialist countries where, despite all their problems, providing for these basic needs was fundamental.

The second factor was that most of the socialist world was created in the context of revolutions born in response to imperialist world wars and their political aftermath. Commitments to planned economic development on a national level – a necessity given the conditions in which those revolutions were won – acted as a fetter on the development of an economic foundation for developing an *international* socialist planned economy. Such an international socialist economy might have served as the basis for creating effective socialist political and cultural forms, forms providing for more effective freedoms and greater participation by the majority of people. The people then might have had the social solidarity and cohesion to deal realistically with the strengths and weaknesses that their revolutions had created, and to more effectively defend socialism from internal and external enemies.³

This outline begins with the political revolution that ushered in the first socialist state in history: the Russian socialist revolution of 1917. It was born in the midst of World War I, with Germany's invading armies deep in Russian territory. Following the revolution was a civil war against counter-revolution and foreign intervention in which millions perished. Failing to destroy the Soviet revolution – to "strangle the baby in its crib," as Winston Churchill noted at the time – the major capitalist states in effect established a policy of quarantining it, established a "cordon sanitaire", as that policy was called after the Versailles Conference. The policy was aimed at isolating the USSR and supporting a ring of anti-Soviet, anti-Communist frontline states in Eastern Europe (a system of containment whose secondary purpose was to guard against a re-assertion of German power in Eastern Europe).⁴

LENIN'S CONCEPT OF NEP ■ The "New Economic Policy" (NEP) of the post-Civil War period brought toleration of rural and urban traders, Kulaks and "NEPmen," and foreign capitalists. This NEP served as a response to the *cordon sanitaire* imposed by the capitalist countries. It was a stopgap and a tactical retreat in the face of encirclement and isolation – a practical way to achieve reconstruction, not a road to socialism. It came at a time of defeat for revolutionary socialist forces in Germany – the most advanced industrial country in Europe – as well as

in Hungary, Poland, and the receding of revolutionary and radical parties and labor movements throughout the Euro-American world.

"The New Economic Policy," Lenin said in a speech to a plenary session of the Moscow Soviet in November, 1922,

"a strange title. It was called a New Economic Policy because it turned things back. We are now retreating, going back, as it were; but we are doing so in order, after first retreating, to take a running start and make a bigger leap forward. It was on this condition alone that we retreated in pursuing our New Economic Policy. Where and how we must now regroup, adapt and reorganize in order to start a most stubborn offensive after our retreat, we do not yet know."⁵

In the late 1920s, the onset of the world depression produced a collapse of world trade and destruction of capital and investment in the developed countries. The world situation in which the NEP came into being no longer existed. Capital was unlikely to come from abroad in significant quantities on any terms, much less so on acceptable terms.

The Stalin leadership adopted a left program at the end of the 1920s: rapid collectivization of the land, socialist industrialization and the forced transformation of sections of the peasantry into a proletariat. The alternatives to this policy were either capitalist restoration or the transformation of the Communist Party into a bureaucratic patronage party of a stagnant NEP system. This was true even despite the disastrous consequences of the Kulaks' resistance and the CPSU and Soviet state's use of force to quell that resistance, which led to the destruction of machinery and farm animals, the famine and the ensuing spread of famine-related disease.

The restoration of an NEP mixed economy as against the socialist construction policies of the Stalin leadership's first five year plan would in all likelihood have amounted to the Thermidor of the Soviet revolution.⁶ Given the world depression and subsequent fascist invasion, the Soviet Union could never have recovered.

EARLY ACHIEVEMENTS ■ The great achievements of the Soviet revolution and the world Communist movement in this period, long mocked by all professional anti-Communists, deserve to be emphasized: the defense of the revolution and the formation of the Third International of revolutionary socialist parties after 1919 made socialism a genuine world movement. It made the plight of the peoples of

China, the African and Asian colonies, the non-European world, central to the development of international socialism. Also, Leninism had provided socialists throughout the world with a political theory, a strategy and a structure for socialist revolution – a point well understood by both those who sought to emulate and adapt the experience of the Soviet revolution, and those who sought to destroy the Soviet state and the Communist and workers parties and movements.

In the 1930s, against the background of the world depression and the Fascist seizure of power in Germany, quarantining the Soviet Revolution remained the principal goal of the non-fascist capitalist powers. Their aim was to appease fascist aggression in Europe and Asia and, in effect, redivide the world with the fascist Axis rather than support a policy of collective security and anti-fascist United Front being advanced by the Soviet Union and the Communist movement.

QUARANTINING SOCIALISM ■ This “appeasement” policy was expressed in the indifference to Hitlerite rearmament and the Austrian Anschluss, and most importantly, resistance to Soviet entreaties for collective security against military aggression. It was codified at Munich in 1938, written in the blood of Spain and in the dismemberment of Eastern Europe’s one liberal state, Czechoslovakia. Through their appeasement policy the declining British empire and the European states sought to avoid a new World War that would lead to new revolutions of the Soviet type.

When Franklin Roosevelt – the U.S. president who represented the most progressive position of the major capitalist leaders of the period – called in 1937 for “quarantining” aggressor states, the idea won no support in international capitalist ruling circles. World capitalism’s view of the world situation was, however improbably, best expressed by the Chinese dictator Chiang K’ai-shek, who, when faced with Japanese invasion said: “The Japanese are a disease of the skin, the Communists are a disease of the heart.” For Neville Chamberlain the same applied to Hitler Germany.

It was these policies, aimed at sustaining the quarantining of Communism and Soviet power, which produced World War II – not the German-Soviet non-aggression Treaty of 1939 (essentially the Soviet reaction to the continuation of the *cordon sanitaire* in the period of fascism). The war in turn led to the Soviet-US-UK alliance which was victorious

against the fascist Axis alliance, including the minor axis states of Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria. It resulted for the Soviets in an estimated 20 million dead, 25 million homeless, 42 percent of Soviet national production (as of 1940) destroyed.

However, the Red Army defeated the German Wehrmacht and all of fascist and collaborator Europe, taking on nearly 80 percent of all Axis forces on the ground from 1941 to 1945, making the overwhelming and decisive contribution to the military victory. This was thanks in large part to the achievements of socialist industrialization and the centrally planned economy that was constructed in the 1930s. Along with the leading role played by Communist-led resistance movements in the struggles against Nazi and Italian Fascists, Japanese occupiers and puppet-regimes, this transformed the political character of the post-War world.

After World War II, socialist ideology and Marxist-Leninist movements spread rapidly with the collapse of the old colonial empires, and, of course, the second great socialist political revolution of history, the victory of the Chinese Communist Party and its Peoples Liberation Army. However, the U.S. created and led the cold war, which from its inception was a revival of the policy of quarantining through encirclement the Soviet Union and supporting counter-revolutionary regimes. The policy – now called containment rather than *cordon sanitaire* – was, by 1950, successful in saving capitalism’s industrial core in Western Europe, including the industrial heart of Germany, as well as Japan.

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION ■ The devastated, capital-poor USSR, in order to reconstruct itself was compelled to draw the nations it had liberated to it in a military-political alliance, under the most desperate circumstances. This was especially so due to a number of factors: the U.S. Marshall Plan aid for the reconstruction of capitalism in Western Europe; the defeat of what most likely would have been socialist revolutions in France and Italy after World War II; the U.S.-led formation of the NATO military alliance and its successful campaign to reconstruct under favorable conditions and re-arm the West German state it had created.

Given U.S. imperialism’s post-War campaigns, there could have been no “New Economic Policy” in the Soviet Union following World War II, nor any breathing space. The only possibility for that lay in the reconstruction aid and reparations promises suggested by Roosevelt at Yalta, which were buried

by Truman after the war. Now, in effect, the ability of the Soviet state to maneuver among its imperialist enemies, to play off one against another – which had been the hallmark of the Stalin leadership's diplomacy – was sharply reduced; particularly by the sudden, and in the history of the capitalist epoch, unprecedented, economic and military hegemony gained by the United States over the entire capitalist world.⁷

The Soviets' ability to reconstruct themselves and defend the new socialist states in Eastern Europe against the early capitalist cold war offensive was an important factor in permitting the Chinese revolution to survive. It was important in preventing nuclear intervention by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations in China, Korea, Vietnam, and perhaps other regions of the world. Indeed, the major capitalist states themselves were shocked at the scope and speed of Soviet recovery, which confounded their most aggressive designs.⁸

The countries of what became the CMEA, emulating the Soviet model, produced free and advanced social services, education, lifelong health services, economic and social security for its people. All this was competitive with the capitalist West – in fact, it aided the social demands of working-class movements in the capitalist countries.

GROWING FRUSTRATIONS ■ But while the Gorbachev assertions of an economic stagnation crisis remain unproven, it is fair to say that the Soviet leadership, living on and through the symbols of the construction of socialism in the 1930s and the victory over fascism in World War II, was essentially resting on its laurels. It began losing touch with a younger generation for whom these achievements were remote, and for whom concepts like "the world revolutionary process" were unrelated to frustrations about the quality of consumer goods, the backwardness of the distribution system, and the petty bureaucratic arrogance, incompetence and corruption which all serious observers saw as features of Soviet life.

The hoped-for thaw in the international cold war, whose political basis was laid in the consolidation of socialism and the defense of Soviet power in the early cold war period, never really materialized. Instead, U.S. imperialism launched a new round in the arms race, and developed under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the 1960s a much deeper and more expensive cold war along with the Vietnam War.

Contributing to the problems were actions by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and Chinese leader Mao Tse-Tung. The crisis in Soviet-Chinese relations, to which both leaders contributed, led to an end of the Sino-Soviet mutual security treaty of 1950. The resulting antagonism between the two great socialist powers would have an enormously negative impact on socialist and anti-imperialist world politics.⁹

SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS ■ The Soviet Union and China would work together in defense of the Vietnamese revolution (albeit China grudgingly), and the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact would provide solidarity assistance to anti-imperialist movements. But the possibility for a genuine socialist world system centered on an economic core of a developing Sino-Soviet relationship – which the capitalist world feared so much in the 1950s – had been lost. This took place just as the economic rivalry between the two Europes had resulted in a huge lead to the capitalist West and its Common Market and allied forms of economic cooperation, which benefited tremendously from relatively low military spending and massive U.S. investment.

The Soviets responded to these threats – particularly to the U.S. campaign to rearm West Germany and bring it into NATO – by creating the Warsaw Treaty organization. But Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech" denouncing Stalin (leaked to the CIA and spread by them internationally) divided and weakened communist parties throughout the world, encouraging doubt, pessimism, and defections by lending great credibility to the core capitalist concept of evil "Stalinism." It was particularly damaging in the industrialized countries, where economic recovery and expansion led many to see "pragmatic liberal capitalism" as the lone survivor in a world where all revolutionary ideologies had collapsed.

Khrushchev's handling of the multifaceted anti-Communist uprisings in Poland and Hungary which his "deStalinization" campaign helped to encourage, his initial vacillation and, in Hungary, subsequent military intervention, also gave anti-Communists of all political views ammunition in portraying the Soviets as "imperialists." It was a view particularly influential among youth in the industrialized countries who turned to Third World liberation struggles as a model for social change after the 1950s.

The Warsaw Treaty system survived NATO's

attempt to destroy it in 1956, but at a substantial cost in the ideological war between socialism and capitalism. In the industrialized countries it stimulated defections from those parties who defended socialism in the struggle against imperialism, and encouraged those parties that had condemned Soviet actions, helping them move closer to traditional Social Democratic policies.

PERMANENT COUNTER-REVOLUTION ■ U.S. imperialism had a four decade commitment to a cold war foreign policy that one might call "Trotskyist imperialism." That is, a policy of permanent counter-revolution, of interventions on the principle that if counter-revolution were defeated anywhere, capitalism would be in danger everywhere (of which the domino theory was the best known expression). Whatever its devastating impact on both the living standards of the U.S. working class and on the struggles for socialism and national liberation in the world, this policy did not produce a contraction of capitalism as a world system.¹⁰

Unlike the United States, the Soviet Union had no socialist Japan, no socialist West Germany, and no socialist transnational corporations to profit from its having to bear the costs of the cold war. This culminated of course in the unprecedented, even by cold war standards, Reagan military expansion of the 1980s, where nearly two trillion dollars were spent by the United States on the arms race.

The Soviet Union and, more importantly, East European countries began to develop a large debt to European capitalist creditors, particularly the Federal Republic of Germany. West Germany's Ostpolitik, begun in the late 1960s under Social Democrat Chancellor Willy Brandt, began a policy of exporting capital to socialist countries under terms which, while they did not initially undermine socialism, made socialist countries more dependent on such capital. Thus they became subject to the negative effects of rising real interest rates and inflation in the 1970s and '80s.¹¹

It was in this context that the Gorbachev leadership of the CPSU came to power in 1985 and sought to "reform" socialism. Internationally, the United States was actively using China as a "strategic ally" against the USSR. Reagan's revival of cold war rhetoric had not been heard since the days of Dulles and the huge military buildup made the continuing commitment to peaceful co-existence illogical. Also, the tactical error of involvement in Afghanistan, where revolutionary ideals and complex Soviet

security interests were suffering major defeats, provided support for those sections of the bureaucracy who supported Gorbachev as a way to turn co-existence with imperialism into reconciliation with the NATO bloc. Economic integration into a capitalist world system offered them far greater rewards as managers and potentially as owners than Soviet socialism.

In that sense, Gorbachev was the product of political stagnation in the post-War period: the failure of the Soviets and their allies to update Marxism-Leninism so as to cope with the higher level of capitalist economic integration and anti-socialist encirclement. Using a vulgarized Marxism, more consistent with Keynesian stagnation theory or even Thorstein Veblen's concept of cultural lag than with Marxism-Leninism (i.e., the idea that the Soviet economy could no longer grow as it had without changes, and cultural ideological changes had to be made to keep pace with the economic changes), the Gorbachev leadership proposed the most sweeping overhaul in both the theory and practice of the Soviet revolution since its inception.

PERESTROIKA'S FAILURE ■ Perestroika and glasnost were their slogans; the decentralization of planning to make it more effective and the institution of market mechanisms, as against "market socialism" or "social markets" were their early aims. Indeed, the early key slogan of perestroika was the appealing but undefined "more socialism, more democracy."¹²

However, the perestroika program, even in its early years, focused on restructuring the USSR and redefining its relationships to its CMEA and Warsaw Pact allies. The main content of glasnost and perestroika was uncritical acceptance of all criticism and an emphasis upon economic "reform" in terms of decentralization, market mechanisms and profitability to export.

Gorbachev also brought into leadership as his "team" such figures as Edward Shevardnadze, Boris Yeltsin, Alexander Yakovlev and others who, whatever their differences and rival ambitions, joined with Gorbachev in attacking the existing system and in making the rank and file Communists of the USSR, and the middle and lower level Party, trade union and industry leadership out to be their "conservative" enemies.

Soviet media carried forward this campaign, portraying Communists as "conservatives" and representatives of the "right" in a society where generations of Soviet citizens had been taught to fear terms

like "conservative" and "right", just as Americans have been educated to fear terms like "radical" and "left." Yeltsin particularly, as Moscow Party leader, was cleverly portrayed by the Soviet media as a fighter against bureaucratic corruption, poor quality housing, shoddy consumer goods, etc., a watchdog "reformer" defending ordinary Soviet citizens.

Finally Yeltsin, with the support of the media and the effective toleration of Gorbachev, began – long before he left the Party – to appeal to Russian chauvinist sentiments, which Lenin had always seen as the great threat to the Soviet state. In this context, also, the Soviet intelligentsia and Soviet media began to import, duty free, the mountain of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist scholarship and journalism which served to further discredit not only the Party's history and that of the international Communist movement, but even socialism as a possibility for human societies. Gorbachev's muttering about the "socialist choice" seventy years after the revolution, Yeltsin's snide remarks that Communism, like religion, was a nice idea but not for this earth, were signals that the top leadership, whatever their differences, had lost their commitment to constructing socialism and were fighting most ferociously against those in and out of the Party who retained that commitment.

PERESTROIKA AND EASTERN EUROPE ■ In Poland and Hungary, where the left had been very weak prior to World War II, and where mixed economies and substantial capitalist elements already existed, Gorbachev's policies became lightning rods for Party liquidationism. (Poland, additionally, had an unpopular martial law government and the Communist Party was held in contempt by much of the population as a sort of patronage front). In Czechoslovakia and the GDR, as well as the Peoples Republic of China, where there had been historically strong Communist parties and/or revolutions accomplished without Soviet intervention, Gorbachev's policies became forums and political umbrellas for attacks on the leadership of socialist governments.

Perestroika took a rightward path in 1988, moving in the direction of greater latitude for market economy and private ownership in the Soviet Union. International relations were increasingly defined in regard to an anti-Marxist and ahistorical "common European homeland." The CMEA became increasingly superfluous for the revisionist and opportunist Gorbachev leadership, as did the War-

saw Pact. In that sense, revisionism fed on itself, where the opportunism of social democratic bureaucrats – their continuing accommodations with capitalism – gave them a greater stake in capitalist society and led to ever deeper accommodations in practice followed by theoretical justifications for the accommodations.

DECLINE IN LIVING STANDARDS ■ For the first time under socialism, a real decline in living standards under peacetime conditions took place in the late 1980s. This was due to the economic shifts created by the penetration of capitalism into Eastern Europe, and the crisis of the Soviet economy brought about by perestroika. Under perestroika, the old planning system was increasingly fragmented but not replaced. Rather than providing an alternative to a largely false economic (as against political and ideological) stagnation crisis, Gorbachev's policies had produced economic fragmentation and something like a socialist depression – that is, sharply declining real living standards in the context of a full employment publicly owned economy.

It is in this context that the political crisis of 1989 should be understood. Western European and Japanese (as against English and U.S.) capitalism were on the ascendancy, and the Gorbachev leadership was embarking upon economic and political policies as well as disarmament initiatives that made concessions to the U.S. and that distanced it from a number of its CMEA and Warsaw Pact allies.

Here one might point out something quite contrary to the myth that anti-Communist political forces had been ruthlessly repressed by a "totalitarian" state system in the Soviet Union or the Eastern European countries. Instead, many had bored effectively from within the system. Factions of Communist parties in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, looking for their own equivalents of the perestroika program, moved forward, bringing masses out into the streets, seizing upon the divisions within Communist parties, and gaining extensive support from West Germany and the United States. And they had the toleration of the Soviet Union. "Totalitarianism" and "Stalinism" – core concepts of anti-Communist ideology imported by Soviet media in defense of perestroika and legitimized by Gorbachev – became ecumenical terms for both revisionist and anti-Communist forces; had either concept had any validity, the bureaucratic political revolution from above for capitalist development would have been politically impossible.

SELLING OUT THE GDR ■ In the GDR, the Gorbachev policy of selling off socialism took the form of doing nothing to slow down the "reunification" snowball launched by the Bonn government. This was done in violation of existing Soviet-GDR treaty obligations, which required mutual agreement before any changes could be made. Gorbachev, however, acted unilaterally. This action discarded policies adhered to by the Soviet Union since the Potsdam Conference of 1945. And, most disgraceful, it abandoned the state founded by German Communists and other anti-fascists that had been the Soviet Union's most loyal and important strategic ally. These actions surprised the capitalist military and political leaders and, more than anything else, convinced them that they had really "won" the cold war.¹³

It is tempting to say that all of these events should be blamed on the Gorbachev leadership of the CPSU. So many in that leadership sacrificed their party and country seeking favor with capitalist elites and hoping to quiet their own critics by blaming everything on the legacy of "Stalinism," "totalitarianism" and the Brezhnev policies. But there is a more realistic explanation for the crisis, a larger context to see it in: the history of cold war militarization over four decades. Coupled with that were the huge disparities in real productive power and wealth between the Western Europe/U.S. alliance and the Eastern Europe/Soviet alliance.

It was not, as Hitler said in 1941 on the invasion of the Soviet Union, that "we will kick the door open and the whole rotten system will collapse," although a version of Hitler's view is now accepted by most traditional anti-Communists. Rather, the Gorbachev leadership opened the door and then joined the legions of economic and ideological carpetbaggers in dismantling the house in the name of renovation, only to turn it over to Yeltsin's capitalist looters after a few desperate men launched or were tricked into launching a campaign to keep the roof from collapsing.

RETREAT AND LIQUIDATION ■ The perestroika program, whatever its initial intentions, deteriorated after 1988 into a policy without a clear class base, without a conception of socialism's future, and without an international policy to oppose imperialism. As such, like the revisionism of the Second International and like various revisionist trends within Communist parties – of which the Browder revisionism in the United States during World War

II is a major example – it responded to crisis with retreat, disorganization and political liquidationism.¹⁴

One thing that helped undercut the forces struggling to defend socialism in the USSR and oppose capitalism throughout the world was the tendency to avoid debate around the Gorbachev-inspired anti-Communist line concerning the character of "Stalinism," the "failure" of "socialist democracy," and the Gorbachev leadership's disastrous capitulations in the political and ideological struggles to the industrialized capitalist world. Gorbachev himself failed to articulate a Marxist-Leninist position or even support Communists against the likes of Boris Yeltsin in USSR elections. He thus buried not only democratic centralism but even the elemental principles of Party loyalty that function in the broadest of bourgeois parties – for example, the Democratic Party of the United States – long before he committed his final act of betrayal by aiding Yeltsin in the suspension of the CPSU and the liquidation of the USSR.

NEW INTERNATIONALISM ■ What we should strive for today is a new active proletarian internationalism based on constructive criticism and solidarity with the growing numbers of people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union opposed to the capitalist path of development which the counter-revolutionary governments push. We should express our solidarity with the Communists of the Soviet Union and active support for their legalization, constructive criticism of and solidarity with the Peoples Republic of China, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, and wherever else people are struggling, whatever the shortcomings and contradictions, to construct socialism.

In the Soviet Union today, there is a huge drop in industrial production, vast inflation and breakdown in all social services. The apprentice capitalists of Yeltsin's entourage preach the economic doctrines of Adam Smith and Milton Friedman while practicing a sort of gangster-comprador capitalism. This is exposing to the overwhelming majority of Soviet citizens that the "transition" to a "market economy" is offering them something much closer to the living standards of Somalia than Sweden.

In this context, communists and their allies through the world should regard the Yeltsin regime as something akin to the government of Vichy France during world War II: a government of collaborators and traitors, dismembering its own territory,

opening up its files to Washington agents, prostituting itself in every way to curry favor with Washington's New World Order, just as Petain and Laval prostituted themselves to curry favor with Hitler's New Order. In this context, Communists and other partisans of socialism in all of the countries that have experienced political counter-revolution might remember the statement of General de Gaulle in 1940: "We have lost a battle; we have not lost the war." They will carry forward the struggle for socialist restoration demanded by the real life conditions of the masses of people, condemned to live under the failed system of capitalism. Recent elections in Lithuania and Slovenia, and the resistance of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies to Yeltsin's attempt to make poverty the road to capitalism, is evidence that the struggle to save socialism did not end with the creation of modern history's great non sequitur: the Commonwealth of Independent States.

'MORE DEMOCRACY, MORE SOCIALISM' ■ "More Democracy" will require "more socialism." If the history of the modern world is any guide, "less socialism," – less working-class power – will lead capitalist rulers and their surrogates to allow less democracy in terms of effective civil liberties, participation in the political process, and economic and social rights.¹⁵

On the future of any socialist country, or group of countries, as against socialism itself, Lenin answered this question best when he wrote in *Pravda* in March of 1923, about the complicated position of revolutionary Russia seeking to survive against the encirclement campaigns of the counter-revolutionary West while its revolution helped to mobilize the toiling masses of the East:

Can we save ourselves from the impending conflict with these imperialist countries? ... I think the reply to this question should be that the issue depends on too many factors, and that the outcome of the struggle as a whole can be forecast only because in the long run capitalism itself is educating and training the vast majority of the population of the globe for struggle. In the last analysis the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense the complete victory of socialism is

fully and absolutely assured.¹⁶

In that sense, the fruits of socialism's defeats, of the political counter-revolutions of 1989-1992, can only provide capitalism with more productive capacity it cannot use; more markets it cannot develop; vastly more people used to the benefits of a socialist economy and the framework of socialist ideology facing the living standards of Turkey rather than Sweden. They will deepen rather than alleviate the general crisis which produced modern imperialism and which will bring about both new revolutions and a revolutionary socialist movement – a movement that learns to combine militancy in deeds with flexibility in political education and effective participatory democratic forms in political life. □

REFERENCE NOTES

1. Another feature of this development is the identification of Communists and Marxists, the traditional left everywhere, in both Soviet and bourgeois media as "conservative" and "reactionary," and referring to capitalist and nationalist/separatist forces as "reformers" and "radicals." Since generations of Soviet people have been educated to see "conservative," and "right" as negative terms, and "reform" and "left" as positive terms, this may be a clever propaganda ploy to discredit socialist solutions with the general Soviet population and with progressive forces in the capitalist world by identifying socialism with a "reactionary" past.
2. For anti-Communist forces, 1989 was their best year in Europe since 1940, when the Swastika and its allied flags flew from Warsaw to Paris. Then it was onward to Yeltsin's Mission Impossible-like counter-coup of 1991 and the subsequent political dismemberment of the Soviet Union. The "New World Order" being hailed in Washington today, at a time when the imperialist countries are drunk with their successes as Hitler was in 1940, is little more than the old policy of liquidating socialism and enforcing imperialist dictates in the Third World. It's a policy guaranteed to deepen rivalries among the imperialist powers and usher in new anti-imperialist revolutionary movements on the world scene.
3. This does not mean that CMEA economic integration did not make significant accomplishments or that socialism, to be successful, must be established worldwide. However, an international division of production, a flexible currency and credit system with cost accountability to advance rather than hinder socialist developmental planning, and marketing techniques to both determine what people want and encourage them to want the goods and services that strengthen overall socialist development, did not develop sufficiently as against the rival European Common Market (EEC) countries and, in the case of scientific marketing and distribution, were an enormous Achilles heel in CMEA countries.
4. For the origins of the "cordon sanitaire," see Arno Mayer's classic progressive work, *The Politics of Peacemaking: Containment and Counter-revolution at Versailles* (London, 1968).
5. Lenin, *Collected Works*, One Vol. Ed., P. 674

6. Thermidor refers to the eleventh month of the French revolution's calendar when counter-revolution triumphed.
7. For a decent left scholarly introduction to U.S. policy and the development of the cold war, see Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War* (New York, 1990) and Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The United States and the World* (New York, 1982)
8. For a good introduction to U.S. nuclear plans and the threat they posed to the socialist countries and the world, see Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod, *To Win a Nuclear War: The Pentagon's Secret Strategy* (Boston, 1987).
9. For the new round in the cold war, see Thomas G. Patterson, ed., *Kennedy's Quest for Victory* (New York, 1989).
10. For the effects of U.S. policy, see Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World* (New York, 1988) and *Anatomy of War* (New York, 1986), the latter serving as the best general history of the Vietnam War from a Marxist perspective (and employing Vietnamese documents). The literature on "de-industrialization," declining U.S. living standards, devastation of infrastructure and social services, decline of productivity and savings rate in the U.S. is huge and growing.
11. Richard Barnet and Ronald Muller, *Global Reach: The Power of Multinational Corporations* (New York, 1974) is a good early progressive work on the subject.
12. Mikhail Gorbachev, *perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York, 1987) is the best introduction to the rhetoric and the aspirations of the early Gorbachev leadership.
13. These events were no secrets. Readers of the *New York Times* were made aware of them, even if the reporters hailed this as the "death of Communism," and saluted Gorbachev as the gravedigger. General Colin Powell and others expressed surprise at the Soviet withdrawal, which turned acts that were unthinkable for forty years into routine concessions. The capitalist media began to proclaim the triumph of the "domino theory" in Eastern Europe and prod Gorbachev to "settle" disputes in Africa, the Near East, and Central America, in the name of "peace."
14. The relationship of the masses of people to the political counter-revolutions in Eastern Europe remains unclear, since, as even most fairly honest bourgeois observers concede, the working class did not play a leading role in these events. The round of elections, which have been equated with "democracy," were, as "democratic elections" are everywhere, mobilization actions. Where Party organizations had in effect fragmented, collapsed, were conceding the major points to their opposition (which was in most places very well financed by U.S., German, and other imperialist sources), their crushing defeats were predictable. Why should those who supported socialism or felt confused or betrayed by the political crisis support those who had failed to defend socialism, who were agreeing with their opponents on the necessity of shifting to a market economy, on the illegitimacy of the societies and the states that they had led, on what was in effect forty years of Voice of America, BBC, USIA propaganda beamed at the Soviet Union and the socialist countries? Any bourgeois politician could have told the Communists of Eastern Europe that nobody wins an election agreeing with the major arguments of their opponents and in effect repudiating themselves.
15. The word democracy is used today in the USSR and other socialist countries in its bourgeois sense, that is, formal freedoms (elections, political institutions) as against effective freedoms (economic and social rights). The absence of effective civil liberties, which did exist formally in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, that is freedom of speech, the press, and assembly for critics and opponents of the socialist system, and the inability of those critics and opponents to form groups and participate in political life in opposition to the Communist Party, along with police violations of the formal rights of citizens, were features of socialist countries and deserve to be criticized. However, Communists and other opponents of capitalism in the U.S. particularly know that such effective freedoms don't exist for the left in capitalist countries, even though the space for organizing, given the history of liberal democracy and the role of labor, socialist, and Communist movements and parties in building liberal democracy, is much greater. The history of anti-Communist, anti-left Red Scares and purges in the U.S. and other capitalist countries, along with the ruthless anti-Communist purge being carried out today in the former GDR, are evidence that even the formal freedoms existing in industrialized capitalist countries are very conditional. Perhaps one can say that without socialism there can be no democracy; without effective civil liberties, in the context of a larger socialist consensus, socialism is devalued and becomes flabby intellectually.
16. Lenin, *Selected Works*, One Volume Edition, p. 711

Yugoslavia: Imperialism's Target

Tom Foley

Based on a September 13th talk at Winston Unity Center in New York City.

If you are confused about what's going on in Yugoslavia today, you are not alone. Clearly it's an intricate, perplexing situation, and most of the information we get only serves to further confuse the question.

To begin making heads and tails of the situation, it is necessary to look not only at Yugoslavia itself, but beyond its borders as well. Yugoslavia is like a piece in a giant imperialist jigsaw puzzle, with many closely interlocking pieces. What I will try to do is to expose the main pieces of the puzzle, and begin to suggest how they might fit together. Any attempt to analyze Yugoslav developments is constrained by the difficulty of getting accurate information on what is really going on within Yugoslavia today. Nevertheless it is possible to make a number of assessments.

- First, the post-cold war period is seeing the re-emergence of all the old inter-imperialist rivalries that existed even prior to 1914. These rivalries are being intensified by the steadily deepening world capitalist recession. Japan and Germany are now rivals to U.S. imperialism. Their major weakness is that, unlike the U.S., they have no access to oil. German imperialism's main access to Mideast oil is through the Balkans, where, as in 1914, Serbia stands in its way. U.S. and German imperialism today are engaged in a power struggle over domination of former Yugoslavia. Germany would like to use Turkey to put the Balkans in a geopolitical vise, and to gain access to Mideast oil.

- Second, Tito's Yugoslavia was no "third way" between socialism and capitalism. The Yugoslav model was a failure from the start. Under Tito there was a steady growth of the petty bourgeoisie, which fed extreme nationalism. But the working class also grew, and it is necessary today to support the healthy, working-class forces who retain military as well as political power in a struggle against U.S. and

German imperialism.

- Finally, there can be no military "solution" to the Yugoslav problem. Only a political solution will work. The political solution must include the possibility of establishing favorable political and economic ties between all republics of the old Yugoslavia on a cooperative, mutually beneficial basis.

OLD PATTERNS RE-EMERGING ■ What has reemerged with the collapse of the socialist states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are many of the old inter-imperialist contradictions and patterns which were submerged by the cold war following the end of World War II, but had earlier led to the outbreak of two world wars.

For instance, prior to the start of the First World War there was an alliance between the Kaiser's Germany, the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Turkey. This same alliance is involved in the maneuvering over Yugoslavia today.

On the other side, the emerging de facto alliance between Britain, France, the United States, and Russia is also similar to the pre-1914 pattern. This alliance is perhaps not quite so clear as that between Germany, Austria, Hungary and Turkey, but it is there. It's very interesting but very dangerous.

Viewed in this context, the very complicated situation in Yugoslavia begins to make sense. In other words, an understanding of the nature of the developments now taking place in Yugoslavia is bound up with the machinations and activities of imperialism.

What are the world relationships of power today, and how do they impact upon the Yugoslav crisis? At one time the United States was the preeminent world power. But that is no longer true. Both Germany and Japan are closing in and even surpassing U.S. imperialism in a number of areas.¹ And the rivalry among these imperialist powers is getting sharper all along the line, including in Yugoslavia. In Yugoslavia, the involvement of imperialism and especially German imperialism is a decisive factor, despite its invisibility to the broader public whose perceptions of the Yugoslav crisis are shaped by the big business media.

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With the Kohl government's annexation of the former German Democratic Republic, its aim now is to dominate all of Eastern Europe and in fact Europe as a whole. The industrial capacity of Britain, France and Italy combined would still equal only 68 percent of Germany's. So Germany is a very powerful and very rich country.

LURCH TO THE RIGHT □ Currently, it is facing the same sort of economic downturn as other advanced capitalist countries.² Coincident with this economic crisis is a lurch to the political right in Germany. Here you have the former East Germany, the GDR, with some 17 million people who have gone through socialist education and training, living a socialist way of life for the last 45 years. How do you integrate them into a highly conservative Western Germany? One way is to terrorize them, to unleash the neo-Nazi forces that are always kept waiting in the wings and turn them loose on the East Germans.

That's what is happening today. Neo-Nazis from all over Western Germany – from Bremen, Hamburg, Munich, and other cities – are descending on East Germany, murdering, burning down houses and committing other criminal acts, exactly as the Storm Troopers did in the early 1930s.

This is a very significant indication of the way ruling class politics are going in Germany today. That is not to say that it is the only factor. There is a very powerful labor movement there. There are significant democratic forces, and there is a German Communist Party. The issue in Germany is by no means decided, but the recent demonstrations of hundreds of thousands are reason for optimism. At the top, though, there is a shift to the right.

Faced with a choice between seeing a socialist Germany or a Nazi Germany in 1932-33, we know what the German ruling class did then: it gave power to the Nazis on a silver platter. "Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it," the philosopher George Santayana said. The German ruling class has apparently learned little from its own history. Fortunately, others have learned much.

In the international arena, the German ruling class is trying to re-establish the alignments that existed prior to the cold war. It has established an alliance with Austria and Hungary. This time, unlike in 1938, Germany did not need to annex Austria which borders on Slovenia and Croatia, nor Hungary which shares a border with Croatia. This

alliance is doing everything possible to back the secessionist forces in those two former Yugoslav republics. Germany – using Hungary as a conduit – has sent military equipment to Croatia – for example: 50 to 60 Leopard II tanks and huge stocks of ammunition and arms taken from the army of the former GDR. Today Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia are all in the same politico-economic bloc, which German imperialism dominates.

What is Germany's aim in this part of Europe? Why is it trying to stamp out the Serbs, to crush Yugoslavia? There are at least two answers to this question, neither one of which has anything to do with humanitarianism. First, German imperialism wants to crush socialism in Yugoslavia and then transform the region into a new area of capitalist exploitation. This is a longstanding objective of imperialism which should not be lost sight of. Second, Germany wants direct access to oil.

It is here that first Turkey and then Yugoslavia enter the picture. What countries does Turkey border on? What possible interests could the Germans have there? The one thing German imperialism lacked in both World Wars was – oil. Oil is the one thing that Germany needs to be a first class world power.

Until now it has relied on the United States to supply its oil via Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region. But why should it have America as the middleman? Turkey borders on Syria, Iraq and Iran, all oil-producing states. Turkey has a claim to Northern Iraq from World War I, to the area around the Mosul oil fields. Lately there has been talk about partitioning Iraq so that Saddam Hussein would be left with Central Iraq which has no oil. Who would get Northern Iraq which does have oil, and who would get Southern Iraq which also has oil?

The drive for oil is clearly behind Germany's alliance with Turkey. Unfortunately Yugoslavia is in the way, as Serbia was in 1914.

MORE AND MORE DIVIDED □ Germany was successful last year in helping to break up Yugoslavia, bringing "independence" to Slovenia and Croatia. That's not to say there were no nationalist movements in those republics. There were and they did have some legitimate grievances.

But overall the breakup of Yugoslavia fitted into Germany's imperialist aims. What resulted was a Yugoslavia divided more or less as it had been in the Middle Ages, when one part was Christian, under Catholic control, and another portion was

under Ottoman Turkish control although Orthodox Christianity continued to exist.

In February of this year Croatia, probably backed by Germany, began an attempt to enlarge its borders at the expense of the remaining parts of Yugoslavia. The Croatian neo-Nazi movement wants to extend Croatia all the way across Bosnia-Herzegovina to the suburbs of Belgrade.

Against this background, the Croatian aggression in Bosnia takes on a different coloration and meaning.

Curiously, in that part of Serbia and Montenegro which calls itself Yugoslavia today, the premier is an American citizen – Milan Panic – who is obviously a front for the United States. However, while the U.S. is quietly putting its men in place in the new Yugoslavia, it does not control either Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, the League of Communists, the Serbian Socialist Party or the Yugoslav Army. Judging from the ferocious U.S. media attacks on these elements in Yugoslavia, U.S. imperialism finds them annoying and would like to remove them from the scene by whatever means is necessary, including perhaps a Serbian civil war.

Bosnia has a substantial Serbian minority. About 31 percent of the population, 1.3 million, are Serbs and 1.9 million people, roughly 43 percent, are Muslims. About 17 percent, 750,000 people, are Croats. A referendum was held in Bosnia on February 29 to decide the issue of independence. The Serbs boycotted that referendum. The Croats and the Muslims, who had a kind of alliance at the time, proceeded to declare the independence of the Croatian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina anyway, regardless of whether the Serbs liked it or not.

FEARING GENOCIDE ■ Meanwhile, right next door in Croatia fighting was already going on between the Croatian neo-Nazis and the Serb minority of 750,000. Considering the genocide perpetrated against the Croatian Serbs by Croatian fascists in World War II – nearly 600,000 slain – there was good reason to fear that Croatia's Serb minority faced annihilation. The only way militarily for the Serbs to get through to that minority in Croatia was to cut across Bosnia. A good deal of the fighting that has occurred in Bosnia has been for this reason.

Simon Wiesenthal, the head of the Jewish Holocaust Center, has said recently that in reality the first refugees from the Yugoslav war were some 40,000 Serbs who were fleeing Croatia, either because they were being driven out or they feared being massa-

cred. Perhaps the military option was not the best choice. An overall Yugoslav political settlement, with measures taken to assure the protection of all peoples, would have been preferable. But even a political solution can be distorted or misused as one imperialist power maneuvers against another for its own advantage.

U.S. POLICY ■ America's attitude has changed in the past 18 months. At first it seemed that the U.S. was in favor of an overall settlement, taking a fairly moderate point of view. It did not necessarily want to see Yugoslavia broken up into pieces. Then, at a certain point, after then-Secretary of State Baker held talks with the Germans, there was a 180 degree turn in U.S. policy, with the U.S. coming out in favor of recognizing the independence of the former Yugoslav republics and favoring accepting them as members of the UN.

In the meantime, articles suddenly began to appear in the American press about how bad Serbia was, depicting Serbia as the chief villain in the world and in Yugoslavia particularly. Since its about-face on Serbia, it seems the U.S. government can find nothing the Serbs have done that was right.

Is there a rivalry between German imperialism and U.S. imperialism in Yugoslavia? Yes there is. The rivalry ultimately pivots over which imperialism will control the former socialist countries and Germany's access to oil. U.S. government leaders have said they would consider any trouble in Saudi Arabia a threat against the United States. This applies to Kuwait too, as the Gulf War amply proved. But, now that one can no longer argue that the "imperialist" Soviets are trying to control Persian Gulf oil, who's the villain?

Germany poses a grave threat to U.S. imperialist control, even if it does not explicitly state its position. It can decide it does not have to go to the Americans to beg for oil. It can point out to the Saudis and Kuwaitis that the United States is losing power in the world, as seen in the rapid decline of the dollar and rise of the German deutschmark. Why, the Germans must be asking their Arab friends, do you allow the Americans to run your oil business? This is all the Germans need to do in order to get things stirring in the Middle East.

This might explain why editorial after editorial in the *New York Times* has been coming out in defense of the Muslims in Bosnia. After all, there are ten times more Muslims dying in Somalia and Afghanistan than there are in Bosnia; why has the

Times been so slow to speak out in their defense? Quite possibly Washington and the news media feel that they have to fend off some kind of threat to their control of the Middle East. And where would that be coming from? Not from Russia which, in any case, has plenty of oil. By elimination one can come close to the real threat.

Thus, inter-imperialist rivalry is being played out on the soil of Yugoslavia. At some point, if it has not already done so, the United States will draw a line which it will make it clear the Germans are not to cross – a policy which Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, who was once U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, seems to have a personal stake in pushing.

FAILURE OF YUGOSLAV 'MODEL' ■ Complicated as the international factors are, Yugoslavia's internal situation is even more complex. The failure of Yugoslavia is the failure of the alleged "Yugoslavia model" for socialism. Lenin once said that there is no "third way," but Titoism presented itself as precisely that.

Yugoslavia was a federal republic. That is, it was made up of independent republics which had a great deal of freedom in deciding economic, political and social questions. This was deliberately designed by Tito. In practice it meant that the rich parts of Yugoslavia got richer and the poor parts, especially where the Albanians were concentrated, got poorer.

Slovenia, which is next to Austria, was the richest part of Yugoslavia, and some elements there argued that since they were the richest part of the country they didn't need the rest of Yugoslavia. They argued that they could form an alliance with Germany and Austria and be much better off. Why, one heard, should we have anything to do with those awful Albanians in the South?

So the Slovenians, followed by the Croats, said that they must break away because they were not getting any richer by staying inside Yugoslavia. On the other hand, those who were getting poorer wanted to break away also, because their living standards were declining. Thus the material base was established for the growth of nationalism.³

Despite their status within a federated Yugoslavia, there was very little centralized direction that would bring both rich and poor areas under a central plan. Then there was the problem of unemployment, a problem that Yugoslavia never solved. Of its population of 24 million, at least half a million had to work abroad because there were no

jobs for them at home. While there were still unemployed people at home, some of those lucky enough to go to Sweden, Germany and other countries made lots of money and, on their return to Yugoslavia, began buying up property and starting businesses. Thus, as industrial development brought the growth of an industrial working class, a new petty bourgeoisie also arose in Yugoslavia. This petty bourgeoisie followed no rules; it was willing to cut anybody's throat to make a profit. This was an explosive situation, fueling nationalism and leading to many of the problems we see today.

Further complicating matters is that the Communist Party in Yugoslavia was dissolved by Tito and replaced by a league of parties from all the federal republics, more like a conference of Communists, each from their own territories, and nothing like a unified Leninist party. In this arrangement, any kind of democratic centralism was impossible because the basis, geographical unity, did not exist. The various parties had no policy in common and worked toward separate, even opposing ends. So within the League of Yugoslav Communists there were tremendous problems, including ideological problems, which led to its dissolution.

BENDING TO THE WEST ■ It seems clear that there was a strong Western influence in Yugoslavia from 1948 on, when Tito broke with the socialist world. He didn't take bribes, but he must have had political, economic and military assurances of support from the West. He also had an independent power base in Yugoslavia which made it easier for him to tilt to the West in order, as he claimed at the time, to be free of Soviet domination. The damage to the socialist camp was horrendous. It can only be compared to, say, one big local union going over to the bosses' side during a bitter, prolonged industrywide strike. The effect on the struggle in Greece, though indirect, was entirely negative.

Even then, Yugoslavia continued to call itself a socialist country and went so far as to present itself as a model for other socialist countries to follow. And, indeed, Titoism did enjoy a certain influence in Eastern Europe and even within the USSR. But within Yugoslavia the widening gap between rich and poor and mounting petty bourgeois nationalism combined to severely weaken it internally. Nobody today points to Yugoslavia as a "model" of the "third way."

It should also be added that the Vatican played a role in Yugoslavia's internal problems. Former

Italian foreign minister Gianni de Michelis used to complain about the Vatican's interference in Yugoslavia's internal affairs, charging there was a powerful Croatian lobby in the Vatican with influence on the Pope, which affected Italy's foreign policy. And that situation continues.

Open religious warfare is an alarming but real danger in Yugoslavia. Catholics, who make up the majority of Croats and Slovenians, are fighting against the Serbian Orthodox, and both are fighting the Muslims. Though the fighting has not taken on an overt religious form, that possibility exists in the present situation.

In this connection, one must say that Tito did institute a secular democratic state, and mixed marriages did legally take place which earlier would have been impossible. For example, it is perfectly permissible under Islamic law for a Muslim man to marry a Christian woman, but the reverse is not true: a Christian man cannot marry a Muslim woman under Islamic law because the idea is that the man always rules. About 20 percent of the marriages in Yugoslavia were mixed marriages. The last president of the old Yugoslavia, Stipe Mesic, who is a Croat, is married to a Serbian woman, and although he comes from a Catholic background, hers is Orthodox. Also, there were many people who described themselves not as Serbs, Croats or Slovenes but as Yugoslavs, which was a healthy sign.

PROPAGANDA FOR WAR ■ When the socialist countries existed in Eastern Europe it was more difficult for Western countries to put across their war propaganda. It's not difficult now. The distortions you see in the *New York Times* and other papers are so awful that any journalist could ask the question: have these people lost all objective standards? Here you have the *Times* writing editorials comparing President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia to Adolph Hitler. When it began to look in the past month or so that the Croats were coming to some kind of agreement with Yugoslavia, then you had the *Times* saying that the Croats are bad also.

For example: there was the tragedy of a convoy of orphans trying to leave Sarajevo, and snipers opening fire. Two children were killed. One was Serbian and the other Muslim. In the news media here it was said that the awful Serbs were shooting their own children. In Western Europe, it should be noted, people have not been presented with this kind of war propaganda, at least for the most part.

The convoy of orphans was organized by a member of the German Bundestag, their parliament. He insisted that that convoy get out of Sarajevo immediately because he had to catch a plane. The Germans who were in charge of the convoy proposed taking a direct route to the airport, but the UN representatives refused to permit them to take this route through what's known as "sniper alley." But the Germans in charge of the convoy insisted on taking that route.

The buses carrying the children were not marked with any insignia; they just rumbled down the street where every sniper was firing at every other sniper. It was really a war zone. There was no protection for the children whatsoever. In fact, it's lucky that only two children were killed in this dreadful incident. Indeed, the United Nations commander in Sarajevo charged that sending the children down "sniper alley" was a criminal act, which it was.

Thus, getting authentic information was, and is, a formidable task in countries like Yugoslavia and Somalia. As they say, truth is the first casualty of war. What does come through is filtered through a screen of qualifications even before it reaches us. In Western Europe they get the news immediately and directly from their representatives in the UN, the Red Cross and people on the scene at Sarajevo. Here, the media has succeeded in convincing their readers that the Serbs shoot their own children and are therefore barbarians. This, obviously, lays the groundwork for possible military "humanitarian" intervention.

CONCLUSION ■ To conclude: the threat of this military intervention today is very grave and is growing. The U.S. and international working class has no interest in maintaining U.S. oil monopolies' control over Mideast oil nor in transforming Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe into a new arena of exploitation. It has no interest in furthering the sinister aims of U.S. and German imperialism to destroy socialism in the Balkans or anywhere else in the world. The interest of the working class and all other democratic forces lies in peace, democracy and socialism, in defending its comrades, brothers and sisters fighting against imperialism anywhere and everywhere in the world. Our job here is to see to it that not one drop of blood is shed for imperialist interests, that not one U.S. soldier is sent abroad to die for imperialism, on fake "humanitarian" pretexts.

What is needed now is an immediate cessation

of the violence and a negotiated political settlement of the Yugoslav situation involving all the disputants in the civil war.

In the great Yugoslav novel *Na Drini Cuprija* (*The Bridge on the Drina*), written by the Bosnian Serb novelist and 1962 Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andric, an elderly Bosnian Muslim shopkeeper looks at the ruins of the five-century-old bridge at the start of the First World War, after the retreating Austrians have dynamited it. With tears in his eyes he tells himself: "If these crazed animals are not stopped now, they will turn the entire earth into pasture for themselves to graze on." I share his sentiments. □

Footnotes:

- 1 A significant new development is that Germany and Japan, the defeated powers in World War II now have suddenly become great "humanitarians" in the sense that their military forces can now be authorized to go outside of NATO areas, outside of Japan proper or Germany proper, and carry out "humanitarian missions" for the United Nations. This represents a truly qualitative change. It means that it is theoretically possible for German troops to be sent to Yugoslavia. This is not now politically possible, but it is legally. This is exactly the formula by which Japanese troops are now being sent to Southeast Asia under the cover of the UN, even though 50 years ago everybody was trying to get them out.
- 2 The front page of a recent weekend edition of the *Financial*

Times of London – the British Empire's equivalent to the *Wall Street Journal* – featured the story: "Japan is staring a recession squarely in the face." The story goes on to list the different reasons why this is true. There may be mass unemployment in Japan. Nippon Steel, the biggest single steel company in the world, is going to have a profit drop of 75 percent this year. This means the people running the steel corporations will be asking, "Where can we put the steel; what about in aircraft carriers?" There will be mass unemployment. What do you do with it? You put people into uniform. A day earlier, the *Financial Times* had reported the German economics minister as saying that the good times for the German people are over, that the people will have to start tightening their belts. The first thing to be cut in this "tightening" will be social welfare, especially health. The economics minister said the needs of Eastern Germany are so great that people in the Western part have to make sacrifices, starting with a wage freeze. And finally, the *New York Times* has reported that the lira, Italy's currency, has hit bottom. The Italian government is asking for a state of emergency rule in order to deal with the economic crisis. The Italian army has already been sent into Sicily and Sardinia – allegedly to fight organized crime, and the government may have to fully mobilize the army and declare a real state of emergency in Italy.

- 3 Indeed, what we've seen happening in Yugoslavia over the past year could happen tomorrow in Italy. That is, the whole country could break up into its constituent parts. Sicily and Sardinia, suitably encouraged by imperialism, could declare independence. There is already a very powerful movement in the industrial North to cut Lombardy away from the rest of Italy. They'd like to go it alone, feeling they don't need impoverished Sicily in the South.

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There is urgent need for collective assessment of what has happened and why, drawing lessons from the profound setback for socialism. Among other things, I believe such an assessment will note that history has recorded setbacks before, perhaps not as severe as this, but that history nevertheless moves forward, from slavery to feudalism to capitalism and to socialism. It does not and cannot keep moving backward.

An international conference of Communist parties will greatly enrich all. The arsenal of Marxist-Leninist thinking will be creatively replenished by reflecting on the reasons for this tragic setback.

How long will it be before the forces of socialism regroup and regain the initiative? Only time will tell. But that it will happen, I have no

doubt. It must be recognized that the balance of forces has changed in favor of the forces of world imperialism, but I believe this is temporary. The basic contradictions of capitalism remain. The "successful" aggression against Iraq did not eliminate the growing mass unemployment in the U.S. or the increasing polarization of wealth where a president of a transnational corporation gets 200 times more than his employees.

The class struggle, as Marx noted, is the motive force of history. As long as there is class exploitation there will be classes. As long as there are classes there will be class antagonisms. And as long as there are class antagonisms there will be a class struggle. This is the dialectical process leading to socialism. □

Arming the Heavens: The Hidden Military Agenda for Space, 1945-1995 by Jack Manno, New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1984, 245 pgs.

This is an important and revealing book. Despite the title, it does not quite cover the contemporary period, not to mention making projections for what is to come. But this should not detract from an accomplishment that is all the more significant when one considers it is published by a mainstream publishing house.

The defection to the United States of the Nazi rocket scientist, Wernher von Braun, and his subsequent oversight of Washington's space programs is a well-known story. The problem for the United States was how to move actively to utilize outer space for military purposes, while denying that this was taking place. The solution was simple: deception. One of the original purposes of the National Aeronautic Space Administration (NASA) – the ostensible U.S. space agency – was to “showcase peaceful U.S. space activities in such a way that the military could go about its business unimpeded by the constraints of international posturing.” (p. 110) There is more: “... The American people continued to believe they were paying for a scientific program of space exploration with the immediate goal of landing a man on the moon ... while the real purpose of America's space activities was to develop military capabilities.” (p. 99)

As per usual, these lies were a bipartisan invention. Indeed, few occupants of the White House were as keen about the militarization of space as Lyndon Johnson. John Kennedy had been elected in the first place in 1960 on the spurious idea that there was some sort of “missile gap” favoring Moscow. Like previous GOP claims, this was no more than “deliberately contrived misinformation.” (p. 67)

Though Dwight Eisenhower is noted for his timely warning about the growth of the “military-industrial complex,” less known is his outlining of the basic underpinnings of U.S. foreign policy and arguing why militarizing the heavens had to be pursued. As the former general told the then-head of Boeing: “Foreign policy is or should be based pri-

marily on one consideration. That consideration is the need for the United States to obtain raw materials to sustain its economy, and when possible, to preserve foreign markets for our surpluses.” (p. 24) That became the rationale for covert destabilization, outright intervention and moving to rapidly establish hegemony in outer space. Militarizing space was the ultimate form of intimidation – to be directed at the entire world if necessary.

Developing an electronic battlefield – i.e. directing military activities in countries such as Vietnam and Iraq with the use of satellites – has been a prime goal of the Pentagon. Like children playing a video game, war would be conducted by “well-protected war managers sitting in front of video display screens” directing “wars, nuclear and nonnuclear alike, safely from a distance.” (p. 119) So-called “manned space flights,” such as the Gemini missions, designed to obtain information about space, were part of an overall plan of deception in that their civilian aspects were stressed while military involvement was shrouded. (p. 105)

This pattern of deception continues. The U.S. right wing continues to value the space station as a “command post for military operations on earth and as a reconnaissance vantage point from which astronauts could control cameras and monitor enemy radio and radar transmissions.” (p. 105) The mad forces of the right are also seeking a “resurrection of the old German [Nazi] space war concept of using reflectors to illuminate the jungle battlefield at night.” The use of satellites during the Gulf War was an extension of this trend. (p. 109)

A major problem is that the necessary exploration of outer space inexorably turns to militarization in the United States. That is not all – it becomes yet another way to transfer the national income from bottom to top. “Beginning in 1968, the U.S. aerospace industry began a sharp decline of fortunes.” (p. 112) Rapacious transnationals, like North American Rockwell, began to beat the drum about the value of space research, and on January 5, 1972, President Nixon announced his support for the space shuttle – conceived by militarists as a key component of war-fighting scenarios. Contracts totaling billions of dollars were awarded to Rockwell, General Dynamics and other major interests.

Financial corruption and militarization have been accompanied by a shirking of basic health and safety requirements in the insane drive to profit and rule. On January 27, 1967, the crew of what would have been the first Apollo manned flight were killed as a fire broke out in their spacecraft. An investigation revealed that the cause was shoddy work by the prime contractor, North American Aviation, which was seeking to cut corners in order to squeeze out more profits.

Disasters at Cape Canaveral have become all too common, yet this high toll has not prevented Pentagon planners from seeking to develop a plane fueled by nuclear power – which could cause a disaster that would make Three Mile Island seem tame by comparison. (p. 110, 196)

Although the United States government has pioneered the effort to arm the heavens, they have justified their programs by arguing that they were merely responding to Moscow. The author tends to disagree with this attempt to assess equal blame. It is not hard to see why. According to General Bernard Schriever, one of the architects of ultra-right schemes and a key GOP advisor, space for anything but military purposes should be considered a “bunch of goddamned bull—!” (p. 158) His profane philosophy reached fruition during the Reagan-Bush years.

Though some elements in the Pentagon initially rejected as unrealistic the “Star Wars” scheme of an impenetrable nuclear umbrella in outer space that could simultaneously be used for offensive purposes, it was pushed through. (p. 166) As then-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger put it in a document leaked to the *New York Times* in May of 1983, the Pentagon had an overall plan to develop weapons that “are difficult for the Soviets to counter, impose disproportionate costs, open up new areas of major military competition and obsolesce previous Soviet investments.” (p. 160) Star Wars was an essential element of the plan to bleed and hemorrhage socialism. Cogently, the author observes that a major domestic backer of these space fantasies, even going as far as to campaign on street corners, has been Lyndon La Rouché and his wacky band of fascists and anti-Semites. (p. 189)

Naturally the progressive community at home and abroad have not viewed these dangerous trends passively. A breakthrough came in December 1976 when the Declaration of Bogota was signed by eight equatorial nations: Brazil, Colombia, Congo, Ecuador, Indonesia, Kenya, Uganda, and Zaire.

They declared that since the geostationary orbital plane passed over the equator it was subject to their sovereignty. (p. 144)

But, as usual, the United States has sought arrogantly to ignore the important principle of state sovereignty in pursuing its agenda. Similarly, the right wing has looked with disdain on the democratic potential of INTELSTAT, the International Satellite Communications Corporation, which is owned jointly by 106 nations and provides services to 135. (p. 182)

This arrogance has been an essential part of the U.S. strategy to emphasize outer space for war, rather than peaceful purposes involving international cooperation. Peaceful applications could involve, for example, more developed direct broadcast satellites with inexpensive, broadly distributed “Dick Tracy like wrist radios” to improve education. More use of satellites to track water flow in an increasingly drought-ridden world would be a boon to parched areas of Southern Africa, the Middle East – and California. (p. 134)

But the author notes, perceptively, how U.S. style capitalism is not conducive to producing such progressive practices. Satellites can “yield useful information about a watershed, but not a stream; land use patterns, but not a farmer’s field. In order for a nation to make use of such information, a strong central government is required, capable of making effective economic decisions regarding the nation’s agriculture, timberlands, water and energy and mineral resources. In the Third World, such effective national governments have been consistently undermined, first by European colonialism, and later by American and European corporations...” (p. 135) It is the Republican right wing in the first place which has sought to discredit the very notion of any sort of state sector that cannot be used excessively to benefit the ruling elite directly.

Likewise the author, justifiably, gives credit to increased outer space exploration as a major reason for the growth of environmental consciousness and the ability to step back and view this planet as a home that should not be trashed. “It was not by coincidence that the first and very successful Earth Day sponsored by the new environmentalist movement occurred just months after the astronauts first walked on the moon.” (p. 115)

The author acknowledges the assistance of the Syracuse Peace Council, “the oldest independent local peace organization in the United States,” in helping to influence this fine, worthwhile book. This

is a work that any activist in any field could read profitably. For if the loony ideas of the ultra-right about fighting wars from outer space reach fruition, our patient labors in all other fields would be negated in any case. □

– Gerald Horne

Devils in Amber – the Baltics by Phillip Bonosky, New York, International Publishers, 1992, 305 pgs.

Books that are written in the midst of ongoing events risk falling victim to the changing headlines. This book is an exception. Readers who have already read *Devils in Amber* have not been surprised by recent events in the Baltics, particularly in Lithuania. If anything, they were primed by the book to anticipate the headlines both today and, most likely, tomorrow as well.

This book is not “about the Baltics” only. It’s “about” our turbulent and fast-changing times. What occurred in the Baltics (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania) are, so to speak, no more than illustrations of political phenomena that embrace the world.

Lithuania, in particular, has been a kind of bellwether for events in the socialist world. It was the first to opt for secession (though it didn’t call it that), the first to split the Lithuanian Communist Party from the all-Union Party – and it is the first to vote out the Sajudis forces that were swept into power on a wave of nationalism and unfettered demagoguery in 1986-1990.

Why did Lithuania bring Sajudis to power and why, just a few months later, did it deliver a resounding defeat to its forces and bring in the former Communist general secretary, Algirdas Brazauskas? Does this mean that other ex-Soviet countries will follow suit, even perhaps Russia itself?

Given the circumstances which this book carefully reconstructs, one understands why Sajudis came to power. This political phenomenon had many unique qualities. In the first place, Sajudis denied that it had political aspirations. Sajudis means “movement.” It presented itself to the Lithuanian people as against political parties, as being no more than an expression of the people who wanted to be free of the binding restraints of a party, very much after the model of the Greens in Ger-

many. They stressed environmental factors and made a great deal out of the fact that the old regime had built two atomic plants on Lithuanian soil. There were many among Sajudis who, tapping anti-Russian sentiment, were not above charging that these plants had deliberately been built under Russian authority and would subject the people to the constant hazards of new Chernobyls. Nevertheless, Lithuania – which has no oil or coal of its own – needed a reliable source of energy and shutting down the two plants deprived them of what could have been a solution to their energy problems. As it turned out, the loss of cheap oil from Russia played havoc with their industries.

Nationalism began to cost the people dearly almost immediately. A nationalist regime can (and did) introduce a new money, a new flag, and eliminate all references both to the Lithuanian Communist Party and the socialist period from 1940-1986. But nationalism could not run industries that had no power, nor inspire farmers to work for private owners of their land when before they owned the land collectively. Nationalism is not an economic system. When it showed itself, it revealed that it is not even democratic by bourgeois standards. Landsbergis, Sajudis’ leader, administered affairs autocratically and through hand-picked henchmen. The “market economy” did not equate to “democracy,” and the misnamed “democracy” did not equate to freedom, and least of all to prosperity.

These were the realities that brought the people to their senses. In giving Brazauskas’ Democratic Labor Party almost 45 percent of the vote in November (while giving Sajudis hardly 19), the people were saying clearly that they were fed up with phenomena that were totally new to them: unemployment, shut-down plants, privately-owned apartments charging exorbitant rents, high prices for consumer goods and even for staples (bread, milk, butter, etc.), prostitution (which was unknown before) and a flood of American movies along with pornography, and the sudden appearance of rich entrepreneurs who, yesterday, were hunted criminals working the black market. Cultural workers particularly agonized over the shrinking of the reading public as subsidies for publishers were eliminated for all works except the rabidly nationalist and anti-Communist.

Devils in Amber provides the reader with an historical background in depth, explaining the source of the kind of one-eyed nationalism that characterizes these small nations which have suf-

ferred from historical neglect – certainly neglect while they were part of the Czarist empire when they had no individuality, and through the socialist period when the West refused to recognize their individual existence, calling them “captive nations.” As part of the USSR, they had full scope to develop their national character in a socialist setting, but this is what the West objected to.

The book takes up the knotty problem of just how the Baltic countries became part of the USSR – legally or illegally, or as a genuine revolutionary expression? It goes into the intricate behind-the-scenes machinations of the Western powers, particularly England, as they maneuvered to position the Baltic countries into de facto allies of Nazi Germany. It describes the anti-Nazi resistance of the people during the war and the role the nationalists played before and during the Nazi occupation, joining in the slaughter of Jews and anti-fascists, killing about 700,000 altogether in a nation of less than 3 million. What was true of Lithuanian nationalists – of whom Landsbergis’ father was a leader – was equally true of the nationalists in Estonia and Latvia.

The socialist period is thoroughly detailed showing why its loss turned out to be such a shock for so many Lithuanians who thought that Sajudis (as it promised) would not take away their socialist gains, but add to them.

And then came the dawn ...

Thus, one can see that this book is not limited to simply chronicling local and untypical developments in the socialist and ex-socialist world. Bonosky is familiar to readers of Political Affairs as an authority on his subject, having published one of the first essays in its pages (“Lithuania: Where Is It Going?” June, 1990), already sounding the warning, as well as articles in *LOOT* and *Covert Action* and the *People’s Weekly World*. His articles on Lithuania have been published abroad including in Japan. Word has come that his writings on Lithuania have even penetrated underground into Sajudis Lithuania itself where his books are well known – perhaps having some influence there in the changing developments. □

– Felix Baran

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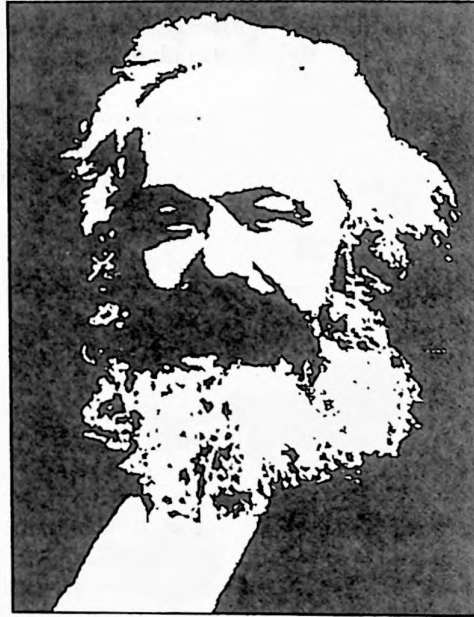
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