

Political Affairs

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The '96 Election

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Party Challenges in the Post Elections Period

Gus Hall

The activities, role, relations and achievements of the Party in the '96 elections calls for a new estimate and renewed concept of our Party.

We need a revised estimate of the Party in order to realistically set our sights, goals and plans for the post-election period. We should base it on all that is new, emerging and developing in the Party, within the framework of a new situation in the country and in the class struggle. Otherwise, we will not see, and therefore not realize, the vast new potential in just about every area of life and struggle, especially our working and fraternal relations with the trade union movement, the AFL-CIO, but just as important the individual unions, their leadership and rank and file. Our mass relations are on a new level.

We are in the process of building a mass Party. Based on mass, street recruiting, we have taken some first steps in making the necessary changes in methods, style and structure to become a mass Communist Party.

However, new developments, especially as a result of the elections, add new dimensions to our consideration of a new mass Party, especially in relation to recruiting workers, trade unionists and mass leaders.

Perhaps the most exciting and potentially explosive developments are the responses to our newspaper's events and our election work by unions, leaders and activists. Our electoral policy – especially our emphasis on the lesser-evil approach and our singular contribution in educating, agitating and organizing against the fascist danger – won the respect of broad circles in the labor movement.

The trade unions, but also popular forces, adopted an electoral policy based on the lesser of two evils. Thus, our greatly increased influence laid the basis for continued growth of the Party generally, but in a new way among workers, trade unionists and trade union leaders.

The electoral work of our state organizations, especially in working with labor to defeat ultra-right candidates, has gained the Party broader acceptance

and respect. Some have won new recognition in helping to build electoral coalitions and alliances. Some have achieved new, mutually beneficial working relations with local, city and state labor bodies, trade union activists and leaders. The base of support and influence of many of our state and district organizations has significantly increased.

Our efforts in building support and sponsorship for the Martinez public works jobs bill, especially on the West Coast and in the trade union movement, has also raised our prestige. This movement now has the makings of a successful national, mass campaign.

This weekend we will discuss the status of the legislation and lay plans for our role in helping to build a nationwide movement that unites labor and people's movements in support of massive jobs legislation.

The welfare cuts will throw millions of poor and oppressed peoples, and especially disabled and poor children, into deeper destitution and despair. It is fast becoming a crisis of emergency proportions.

The special racist and anti-children impact, the anti-immigration attacks and the workfare issue make the creation of millions of new, public works jobs an immediate priority. Parallel with this fight, we must also help build a movement to compel Clinton to keep his promise to review and undo the worst elements of the Republican welfare bill he signed.

The ultra-right danger has been blunted. The American people rejected the so-called "Gingrich Revolution," the "Contract on America" and, wherever there were decent Democratic candidates, millions voted against the Gang of 73.

The American people have demonstrated, once again, that when their hard won economic and democratic rights are threatened they can see through the propaganda fog and fight back.

Thus, everything has changed. Nothing is the same as before the election period. The trade union movement will never be the same. The communities of the racially and nationally oppressed will never be the same. The mass movements will never be the same. The class struggle will never be the same. The

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trade union movement and people's forces are in a new, stronger, more powerful position. The challenge now is to build on these changes, to continue moving in a positive direction to win new victories and further push back the ultra right in the new year.

RAISING THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ■ Now, let us turn to the Party. I must tell you that I went through much soul searching before deciding on the content and tone of my remarks, especially in relation to perhaps the most difficult and urgent question on my mind – the status of our finances and specifically our Advance Gift Funds, and our attitude towards them.

I have reviewed several openings I have made in the past on these same questions. And I must say that I don't think we have come nearly far enough on them. I don't think we have made enough changes, either in practice or in attitude.

However, I do think the level and tone of the discussions improved. I think this is a result of our unity, our deeper appreciation of Marxism-Leninism, our greater maturity and flexibility in tactics and a new, higher level of mass activity.

So, initially I intended to place some tough questions rather directly around specific weaknesses and serious problems.

However, after some individual discussions, some phone conversations and some rumors that reached my ears I had to do some rethinking. The rumors mainly relate to whether there is such a thing as a financial crisis, whether there will be cuts and layoffs; whether some comrades will be asked to double up on assignments; whether we are considering selling the building; whether we will raise or decrease wages.

In anticipation, a few comrades have even come to me to explain some questionable behavior and a few to complain about others' behavior.

I have, unfortunately, decided (once again) that we are not ready for a sharp, up front, direct discussion. I have been convinced that such an opening will not have positive results, and could result in just the opposite, even some blowups.

So I will try to come at the questions more generally, with an overall appeal to you as individual Communists, as Party leaders and as a leading collective, to do some serious self-examination and self-criticism.

It is now five years since the 25th convention.

And this year we returned to Cleveland for our 26th – a magnificent, united, Marxist-Leninist convention that demonstrated to the world that our Party has survived and thrived.

Because of our Party's history, its role and experiences we are in a unique position to advocate a special concept I have been developing that integrates our country, our class and Party.

Ours is one United States, one nation. We have one working class, one Communist Party with one national leadership, one national Communist newspaper and one national theoretical magazine, each with one editorial board. We are now in a much better position to fight for this concept in our class and in our Party.

With these introductory remarks, let me briefly enumerate the main, positive features of the Party. The purpose is to lay the basis for raising some rather serious criticisms, some flaws and weaknesses – some old, some new.

First, let me say I have come to the conclusion that when it comes to the kind of questions I am going to raise that it is not possible to lay down rules and policies that every Party leader must follow.

Questions such as work habits, productivity, discipline, honesty, collectivity, camaraderie, maturity, self-criticism, level of commitment (what I call characteristics of a "Communist personality") are questions leading cadre must raise within themselves in a process of self-examination. Communist standards have to be self-imposed.

We can discuss the overall questions collectively, and we should, but the soul-searching, resolve and change, are things individual comrades must ponder and decide for themselves. We should keep in mind that when a comrade makes positive changes the effects are not only within the individual, but also impact positively on the collective the individual is in.

Thus, my aim is to raise the level of Party consciousness and some specific questions related to the Party in the hope that it will stimulate discussion. But just as important that it will motivate new patterns of thinking and probing that will result in positive changes in attitudes and behavior.

Another goal is to motivate this top Party leadership to think more in terms of the legacy we create in our lifetime and lifework that the next generation of Communist leaders will inherit and build on.

I believe that we tend to think about the Party

too much in terms of the day-to-day and the present. We think too much in terms of tomorrow and the immediate future and not nearly enough about the status and security of the Party over the long-term and even far into the future.

On the one hand, perhaps more than anyone else I know how far the Party has come since the early days, especially the '40s and '50s. On the other, I know how far it can and must go to reach a level of financial, investment and advance fund security. Maybe it is because I was there when the Party lost everything (when I came out of prison) and we had to slowly, painfully, build up from ground zero.

Perhaps that is why I have a longer-range perspective, why I worry so much and feel the urgency of building a solid, secure permanent financial and leadership base now and for the future. At least as reasonably secure as a Communist Party can be operating in the belly of the beast.

POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS ■ Now let me pose the positives and achievements of the Party in the following way, by applying the dialectic of appearance and essence.

First, the appearance, the image of the Party, its organizations and operations, its status and achievements. Appearance is part, one level of truth. But it is not the whole truth. Appearance is basically the way many, both outside and inside, now see our new Party. Unfortunately, it is the part-truth too many Party leaders see as the whole Party.

Our building, which has no mortgage, is prime real estate, a financial and political asset. It is our face to the world. Our big, eight-story political home, with its beautiful storefront bookstore, projects a public image of stability, permanency and legitimacy. It is our national center, where we hold our important meetings, events and affairs. It is where visitors, guests, fraternal parties and the mass media come to visit, to meet and get their first impression.

We have a national, paid full-time and volunteer staff of about 30, including six districts that are nationally subsidized.

We publish a national weekly newspaper, *The People's Weekly World*, with a full-time paid and volunteer staff of about 30, working with the latest technology.

We have our own print shop, Prompt Press, which uses advanced printing technology and is now a growing business.

We publish a prestigious theoretical journal, *Political Affairs*, headed by Joe Sims, that people can read in libraries and universities, including government agencies, on the Internet, as well as buy in bookstores. *PA* is sent to fraternal parties, U.S. and international individual subscribers.

We have our own publishing house, International Publishers, headed by Betty Smith. We have a large storefront Unity bookstore, headed by Mavis Ueberall. We have a surprisingly large group of volunteers that contribute their skills, energies and time.

We have state/district organizations in most large urban industrial centers, and the beginnings of a rebirth of the Party in the South. We support and subsidize a number of districts and district organizers.

As I have already said, our state/district organizations, especially as a result of the '96 elections, have achieved new outreach and influence, especially among the ranks of labor, but also among popular forces and especially community organizations.

Through a return visit to Warren and Youngstown, Ohio and some follow up work by comrade Judith Le Blanc, who heads our labor/community relations and our labor solidarity work, and the work of our steel and other comrades, we have achieved a higher level of working relations and recognition as well as expanded potential for recruiting.

We subsidize a national youth organization, our Young Communist League.

We ran two Communist electoral campaigns – David Mirtz in New York and Frank Soifer in Oregon – that demonstrated we can now run to win, especially local elections, and that we should no longer run “last-minute Communist campaigns.” We have to develop Communist candidates and Communist constituencies.

We published and distributed over 250,000 brochures and leaflets on the streets, at national conventions and conferences of labor and civil rights organizations and registered thousands and talked to millions on the streets, through our newspaper and the mass media.

To a great extent due to the work of Terrie Albano, our new Media and Public Relations director, we spoke to millions on talk shows, in newspapers, press releases and interviews – from the first days of the primaries to election day.

We are invited to speak at universities and orga-

nizations for honorariums, recently at University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the Yale Political Union, and the National Lawyers Guild. The invitations so far show that when we get out our new Speakers Bureau brochure we can expect to reach new audiences, especially on the campuses.

We are invited to international conferences such as the congresses of the Vietnamese and French Communist Parties. We are also invited to eyewitness events, such as the Russian elections, to tour countries and report back from Cuba, (Tim Wheeler) to Australia and New Zealand (Rick Nagin).

We are on the Internet. We initiated the Rednet, an internet network of Communist and Workers Parties around the world. We are now interacting with millions in cyberspace, with diverse people and movements on the electronic superhighway. Thanks to Scott Marshall, leading a few dedicated advanced thinkers, we have a Party Web site, which won an award. We are set up for E-mail. These developments extend our reach and influence manyfold.

We are initiating an International Commission on the Global Economy, which will start with discussion and exchange articles in *Political Affairs* and on the Internet.

Our building houses the Reference Center for Marxist Studies, which is one of the best and most complete libraries and sources of Marxist-Leninist books, pamphlets, magazines, etc.

We conduct two main fund drives during the year: a \$400,000 drive for the *PWW* and a \$100,000 drive for the Party.

Because we cannot survive on these drives, even when we complete them, we initiated our Advance Gifts Funds. Over a period of 15 years and through a trial and error process, we have built up these funds. Of course, the majority of this principle is not ours. This year the Party, the *PWW* and the building used up almost all the earned interest on our fund's investments, which means we do *not* re-invest the earned interest so that it will earn more interest.

In other words, the main expenses of the newspaper, the building and the Party together eat up all the fund drive income and almost all the earned interest from the fund's investments.

For example, we have no emergency reserve fund for the building. We have just signed a contract for emergency repairs that will cost \$20,000 immediately. And, we will need an additional \$20,000 for a new roof in the very near future. These are not

options. These repairs must be made when the emergencies occur.

FINANCIAL HEALTH ■ Our financial health and security, especially the Advance Funds investments, depend to a great extent on the health of the stock market and government policies.

Now that the election campaign is over we can admit that Dole was right when he said that there will be an "economic crisis." There's no timetable. But it will happen. And when it does the more we have invested the less the turbulence and fluctuations will hurt us. Also, we have to keep in mind that we have come into several large wills that will not likely be repeated.

We have not run any campaigns for Advance Gifts, nor have we worked on a wills campaign for some time. which means the funds are stagnant. We are not increasing them.

And, what is stagnant begins to decline if there is no increase. Some of the reasons are reduced interest rates, inflation, increases in expenses and overall costs. Precisely because of our recent achievements we have to expand to grow, and increase our activities, and literature. However, our present financial situation does not allow for a new Party concept of growth and expansion.

We have estimated that we would need at least double what we now have in the Funds to enable the Party and its organizations to live on the interest, together with the fund drives.

We will never be in a situation where fund drives will be unnecessary. However, if we greatly increased the total of our Funds, we would not be so totally dependent on them for survival.

To get at the essence, the stark reality, of our overall financial situation let me return to some of the positive features that I described as they appear on the surface.

Our building. Yes, it is everything I described. But it is much more. It is very expensive. Yes, we own this valuable real estate. But the yearly taxes are over \$80,000, utilities are \$78,000 a year and maintenance costs vary, but are in the tens of thousands. The repairs now being done on the exterior and a new roof very soon will cost \$40,000. It is great that we raised over \$70,000 for the special birthday drive. Now a big chunk of it will have to go for paying the building repairs.

We are celebrating our 20th anniversary in this building. The building is over 80 years old. In the

very near future we should think of doing some renovations, especially the entrance, the Unity Auditorium and the National Board's 8th floor. We will soon initiate a special 20th anniversary building fund drive.

Beneath the appearance of our great, wonderful newspaper is the fact that with even with all the fund drive income and monies from the funds the *PWW* owes the print shop between \$40,000 and \$50,000 in back bills for printing the paper. This debt, in turn, impacts on our print shop.

The whole truth about our beautiful bookstore has to include the fact that it does not make a profit. It does not pay rent, which reduces the income of Advance Realty. It does not contribute to the financial well-being of our Party.

Political Affairs is not self-sustaining. It does not raise enough money in subscriptions and fund drives to meet its expenses. It does not pay rent and the Party pays the editor's salary.

International Publishers is self-sustaining. It does pay rent and the Party does not pay salaries or operating expenses.

Notwithstanding the importance and benefits of having a Party publishing house, the fact is the Party does not get any financial benefits.

The Reference Center is self-sustaining. It pays its bills, covers its costs, pays minimum rent and is one of the few institutions that has a reserve bank balance. However, the Center makes no significant contributions to the financial well-being of the Party or to the Advance Funds.

STATE/DISTRICT PARTY ORGANIZATIONS ▣ Although most districts that are nationally subsidized have grown and some have greatly broadened their base of support, they are still not self-sustaining. There are exceptions, like Illinois.

About 11 districts, plus the Young Communist League, now receive regular interest payments on Funds started for them by the national Party. These are not in question. However, this should be taken into consideration when discussing district obligations and responsibilities to the Party.

Some districts are doing better, but the state of the submission of dues and district responsibilities is still unacceptable. It reveals a misconception about and wrong attitude toward Party finances. It is one of the serious weaknesses we should talk about.

Two national YCL cadre are presently on the

national payroll. The YCL has recently started to pay office rent, but has very little to operate on. The YCL has some special financial problems, some of which stem from being a youth organization. But the truth is that fund-raising efforts are minimum. We will soon have a special Board meeting on youth work and the YCL.

We have a great group of totally committed volunteers, especially considering that we do not have anyone assigned to organize and structure the work of volunteers. Because we cannot add paid staff, and wherever possible we are trying to reduce it, we should – and could – have a much larger voluntary organization.

Thus, I believe that because of appearances comrades avoid recognizing or accepting the truth about what I consider one of our most damaging weaknesses – lack of a serious approach to raising and spending Party money.

I believe that every member of this leadership should feel responsible for the financial affairs of the Party. Each of us should raise money, but perhaps even more important be responsible for the spending and saving of money. This is not now the case.

COMMUNIST PERSONALITIES ▣ In the process of preparing for these remarks and thinking about our shortcomings, weaknesses and attitudes I am coming to the conclusion that there really is such a thing as a "Communist personality." I have talked about this several times before but my concept of such a personality has become more definitive and I would like to share it with you.

I do not think Communist personalities are innate or inborn. I think such a personality is developed over a long period of time. But only if comrades become self-aware and self-critical and initiate a conscious process of maturity and development, politically, ideologically and psychologically.

I am convinced that there are specific characteristics and traits that are necessary to becoming a Communist personality, but especially a leading Communist personality. Some comrades have traits that make it easier to mature into Communist personalities. But I believe comrades who have reached the National Board level, in fact all of us sitting in this room, have the potential.

Some traits are optional, like a natural ability to be outgoing, self-motivating or well-organized. But most are not. Change occurs quantitatively over time. With effort, willpower and patience, qualita-

tive change occurs.

What are some of the necessary ingredients of a Communist leader? Well, Communist personalities must be honest, scientific and objective, kind, sensitive, patient, modest, comradely, productive, disciplined, self-critical, democratic, have high moral and ethical standards of behavior and more.

I started to define the concept of a Communist personality, especially the added special characteristics of a leading Communist personality when I couldn't answer questions about why we have some serious weaknesses but don't seem to be able to make some basic adjustments and changes, even after discussions and over periods of time.

Let me raise some of the troubling questions about our functioning, our behavior and our relations that I think reveal such weaknesses and led me to think about communist personalities. Maybe it will give you some food for thought, too.

- Why don't most leading comrades feel responsible for the financial well-being of the Party? Why do so many *not* raise money?

- Why do most commissions *not* function and leading comrades in charge do not even raise the question?

- Why do we set up committees that don't function?

- Why don't we have more schools, educationals, classes, discussions – especially on theoretical questions?

- Why do many comrades decide their own schedules, without consultation? For example, what meetings they will and will not attend, when they will arrive, when they will leave and return to the meeting.

- Why can't we call meetings confident that everyone will be there, or that we will know why they aren't? Why do so many comrades constantly disrupt meetings by getting up and leaving?

- Why do some comrades read newspapers and write checks while attending meetings?

- Why are our work habits and discipline poor?

- Why do comrades have major assignments and do not work on them?

- Why do comrades volunteer or accept tasks and not carry them out; and, conversely, why do some comrades never volunteer?

- Why do so few comrades write, especially for the paper, but also for *Political Affairs*?

- Why are there blowups in meetings and between comrades? Why is there still so much back-

biting and gossiping about comrades and between comrades?

- Why do we have such "drunken sailor" spending habits?

- Why are there leading comrades who do not function in clubs?

- Why are there so many leading comrades who have many good relations but don't recruit? How is it possible to be active in the Party for 20-25 years and not recruit?

- Why is our productivity not very high? Why do some comrades feel they don't have to work a full week, or a full day?

Of course in many cases there are circumstances of health, personal and other problems that cause comrades to behave in questionable ways. But the fact that the collective is usually not aware of comrades' schedules raises unnecessary questions.

I raise these questions because I am convinced that the answers reveal underlying weaknesses that we must tackle and overcome if we are to meet the challenges that are before us in this post-election period.

THE MAIN CHALLENGES ■ What are some of the main challenges before us? In many ways the most serious and important challenge is how to continue and consistently recruit, how to make it part of our everyday work. And, just as important, how to consolidate new members.

The main approach to consolidation must be how to activate new members. The challenge is how to involve new members in mass struggles and actions, how to draw them out onto picketlines, to distribute our newspaper and leaflets; how to entice them to educationals that are relevant to their lives and, especially, how to conduct social affairs that will bring people out and together.

Club meetings should be a part of the activation process, but not the only approach. I think experience has shown us by now that invitations to meetings alone are doomed to failure.

Consolidation and activation should be a single process. We cannot consolidate without activating new members.

The base of our Party is and must be, industrial workers. Recruiting and consolidating workers cannot be achieved in the same way as mass, street recruiting. Recruiting workers requires different approaches. In some ways it is more difficult than street recruiting.

Thus, the second challenge we face is the re-establishment of our policy of industrial concentration. This includes regular distribution of the *PWW* at shop gates. It includes the regular publication of special, industrial issues of the paper. It includes the publication of regular shop papers. It includes drawing up district and club industrial concentration plans of work.

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT & THE PARTY ▢ The third challenge is helping to solve some problems of the new trade union movement. For example, while there is some successful organizing of the unorganized, the majority of the working class remains unorganized. And the basic corporate policy remains the destruction of the trade unions. The corporations are especially committed to this goal because they are well aware that they will be forced to deal with a new, class struggle-oriented trade union movement.

We have to play a bigger role in helping to build labor's political independence. The potential is now tremendous. However, it is problematic whether the Labor Party can play a leading role in establishing labor's political independence in light of their non-involvement and lack of a positive role during the elections.

We should work to convince the Labor Party that their policy is wrong and move them into electoral activities, if possible. Without some basic changes, the labor movement will never accept it as a viable channel for labor's political independence.

We have to continue the correct tactic of building the united front that we pursued during the election campaign. The differences that mainly dissipated should not be the basis for post-election differences.

In fact, our policy and practice must be that we will reach out widely to every progressive force and organization, including those we may have had differences with, to build united front relationships and united front movements. We must help to make them strong, powerful and influential enough to further push back the ultra right, put pressure on the Congress and compel Clinton to move in a pro-labor, pro-people direction.

Post-election tactics must be based on unity in struggle. This should include post-election unity of the trade union movement; post election unity in the area of independent political action; post-election unity in the struggle against racism, against chau-

vinism; post-election unity in the struggles of the unemployed and the homeless; post-election unity in building a movement to win the Martinez public works legislation; post-election unity in the struggles against privatization in order to save public education and the environment.

We also face a challenge in building on the higher level of working relations we have developed especially with trade union forces, but also with many communities and people's organizations.

There is a new openness, a new willingness to work openly with, accept and respect Communists as part of coalitions, alliances, campaigns, etc. This has not gone unnoticed by the ruling class and government agencies. They are well aware that we are now an accepted and influential force in the political life of our country.

Therefore, we have gotten increased attention by the FBI and its paid harassment forces. The most blatant was the all-out anti-Communist campaign against Kucinich in Ohio, which we have heard about at this meeting.

Another is the attempt to link our Party with a cult in Brooklyn arrested on weapons charges. Our press release response was a timely and appropriate one. It was effective. Reuters ran it on their newswire, putting the media on notice that linking our Party with such groups and cults will result in legal action, if necessary.

RENEWED STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM ▢ A fourth challenge is to find ways to stimulate and activate the struggle against racism. We have to find ways to refresh, replace and restore the affirmative action programs that have been destroyed and play a role in the fight against the implementation of Proposition 209 in California.

In the struggle against racism, we have to intensify the struggle against police brutality, criminalization and the horrendous, racist cuts in welfare programs, at the same time fighting for jobs, not workfare.

We have to play a leading role in the struggle against the vicious, chauvinist, racist and anti-immigrant campaigns raging in many states. And, we have to raise the specter of increased anti-Semitism, especially in New York.

The ascent of the extreme right and fascist-fringe forces that coalesced in the Gang of 73 set

Continued on page 29

The Meaning of the '96 Election

Jarvis Tyner

This past year was period of a great electoral struggle. Right now the struggle continues over how to interpret the results. Right wing Republicans contend that this election was a victory for them and their program and a defeat for organized labor. The conservative Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) is saying that this election was a victory for moderation and centrism and Clinton won because he moved to the "middle" and that's where he should govern from. These are the interpretations that dominate the media today. In my view, neither of the previous interpretations accurately tell the story of what happened in the 1996 elections.

What is currently taking place is a struggle over the mandate of the elections and the capitalist ruling class is doing every thing to put a favorable spin on it from their class perspective. Actually this election was a setback for them.

In 1994, in a low turnout election and after Clinton retreated from the promises he made in 1992, the Republicans swept the House and Senate. They introduced the Contract with America as their program. Gingrich was riding high. Since then, we've had a massive assault on vital working class entitlements; Medicare and Medicaid, welfare and all people-serving programs of the federal government have been put in jeopardy. Civil rights, labor rights, immigrant rights, the rights of women, youth and students and the elderly have been under attack. The number of people put in jail tripled from previous periods and in this atmosphere, right wing violence increased; hundreds were murdered from the bombing in Oklahoma City, the racist militia movement grew, the KKK and Nazis became bolder and more open, there was a national campaign to burn African American churches and police violence increased.

In their effort to pass the Contract, the right wing majority in Congress defiantly shut down the government with some in their ranks openly declaring that not having any federal government

was a good thing.

These actions resulted in a total isolation of the Contract, Newt Gingrich and the ultra-right in general. The people had had enough and a majority of voters who went to the polls in 1996 wanted their vote to stop this right wing rampage. And that's what most voters voted to do. This election therefore, was not a continuation of what happened in 1994 nor a victory for centrism. This election was a very important step towards a reversal of what happened in 1994.

This election was no "defeat for labor". While not a total victory, it showed that labor has reemerged as a powerful independent force on the U.S. political scene – a force to be reckoned with on a new level.

This election was not a setback for third party politics either. In fact it strengthened the independence of the key forces needed to realize a mass progressive third party movement in our country today.

Overall, this election moved the struggle against the Republican ultra-right to a new level. After this crucial electoral struggle, there is a psychological renewal among working people, a boost in their confidence because they know they did the right thing and had a tremendous positive impact. When AFL-CIO head John Sweeney was asked how he felt about the elections he gleefully responded, "I'm happy."

The momentum out of this election is not only a reason to breath a sigh of relief, but also a reason for some celebration. But mainly it is a reason to continue the struggle because the danger is still great. This election shows that with good progressive politics, unity, hard work and determination, the right wing juggernaut can be totally defeated.

What happened? Despite the low turnout among other segments, a massive electoral coalition – primarily made up of Labor, African American and Latino voters – came to the polls in increased numbers and voted against the right.

Not enough can be said about labor's outstanding leading role. They worked hard, brought out their troops and yes, they followed their leader-

Jarvis Tyner is Vice-Chairman of the CPUSA.

ship's advice which was "Don't vote like Democrats, don't vote like Republicans, and don't vote like independents. Vote like workers." The organized force of the AFL-CIO, its TV ads and street muscle made the victories possible.

Despite the low turnout and the highly financed and extremely dirty Republican campaigns, despite the passive Democratic machine and the weak and even backward positions of Clinton and many Democrats, despite all this, important victories were scored by progressive forces. The ultraright Republicans fell short of many of their major goals.

Most importantly, as the Communist Party USA statement put it, "the fascist threat which emerged in the course of the 104th Congress, and especially at the GOP Convention, has been checked for now."

AVERTING A CATASTROPHE ■ What were the Republicans' plans? The Republicans were out to elect Dole, and win control of all three branches of the government. They wanted to increase their majority in the House and Senate, elect more governors and win majorities in state legislative bodies. They wanted to pass a number of mostly bigoted and pro-corporate propositions with the main emphasis on the racist, anti-immigrant Proposition 209 in California. From this they would work to pass the Contract and additional new anti-working class, racist measures including Dole's proposal for a 15 percent tax giveaway to the rich. It would have been a tragedy if they had succeeded.

However, they did not. They failed to win the White House and suffered a serious reduction, from 40 to 20, of their majority in the House. The Democrats made a net gain of 10 in the House and the Republicans made a gain of four in the Senate. The gains in the Senate were mainly because a number of Democratic incumbents went into full retreat after 1994 and decided not to run. Democrats increased their number of state governors and the number of state legislatures they control, including the California State Legislature. Although Proposition 209 was passed in California, it is under sharp attack in the courts and on the streets in the post-election period.

There were also a large number of near-defeats for the Republicans as well. Some races are still in contention. When you look at the many defeats and near defeats for the Republicans, it is clear that

they were being pushed back and this election could have been a total victory for progressive forces.

But it could have gone the other way also. House Speaker Newt Gingrich, on the eve of the election, was quoted as saying, "... but the truth is without the union bosses we'd be gaining at least 30 seats."

The right could have succeeded. The popular vote in the presidential race was a lot closer than it was supposed to be. In the popular vote, Dole ended up only eight points behind; not the 20, 15, even 10 as some of the polls were predicting.

Dole, Gingrich and the Contract were unpopular but the full force of those mass sentiments did not show up at the voting booth in many statewide and Congressional races. We are still examining the figures but, when you look at the available numbers, the Republican plan for victory in 1996 was no pipe dream; they had the finances and organization to achieve their goals. That is why the Communist Party's warning of the fascist danger, which alerted tens of thousands of activists, helped spur on the education and mobilization of millions of voters. This was a vital contribution to the whole struggle. The Republicans could have won.

When you look at what was done (or not done) by the Democrats, it must be said, again, if it were not for the leading role of the AFL-CIO, the large turnout and consistent anti-right-wing vote of union members, African American, Latino and working class voters especially, the outcome of this election would have been tragic.

In the early stages of the election, during the Republican primaries, there was a massive effort to define the national campaign based on right wing issues right wing issues. They wanted this election to be dominated by issues like, abortion, family values, downsizing government, cutting taxes, "reverse discrimination" not civil rights, individual responsibility not government assistance, privatization, and the need to "save" our nation by promoting religion (mainly Christian religion) as the dominant ideological force in the life of the nation. These are the pivotal issues they wanted to dominate the electoral debate. But due to the efforts of organized labor, united with civil rights groups, our Party and other progressive forces, their plans were thwarted, and a different agenda of issues was forced into the debate. Thousands of TV ads all across the country made "America Needs a Raise" the dominant

theme of the election. Even the right-wing-dominated Congress had to respond and pass an election year increase in the minimum wage. Instead of dominating the election, the right was put on the defensive. Because of the massive ad campaigns of the AFL-CIO and their joint efforts with civil rights and other progressive forces in voter education, registration and mobilization, it was possible to block the right, register some important electoral gains and set the stage for new victories in the future. This was an historic effort.

According to an Associated Press release of March 1996, by November '96 the over-18 population will total 189.5 million people. Of these, 102.2 million are women or 52 percent, 22 million are African Americans or about 12 percent and 18.6 million are Latino or about 9 percent. The Committee to Study the American Electorate said 104.4 million people voted in 1992. In 1996, 95.8 million voted – a decrease of 8.6 million. Almost one half of the voting age population decided to stay at home. This decrease took place despite the five million more people who were registered to vote in 1996. In 1996 we experienced the lowest level of voter participation since 1924.

LABOR LEADS THE WAY ■ Despite the low turnout, labor's efforts inspired and brought an increase in the vote from union households. In the 1992 presidential election, union households accounted for 19 percent of the electorate. In 1996, the union household vote increased by 2.3 million and accounted for 23 percent of the overall vote. This meant millions of additional votes for Clinton and other Democratic candidates. According to a poll taken by Hart Research Associates on Nov. 6-7, union households voted 64 percent for Clinton, 28 percent for Dole and 8 percent for Perot. Non labor households voted 46 percent for Clinton, 45 percent for Dole and 8 percent for Perot.

In the Congressional races, AFL-CIO members voted 68 percent for Democrats and 32 percent for Republicans (down from the 40 percent who voted Republican in 1994).

The African American vote also increased in 1996. According to the Voter News Service (VNS) in 1992, African American voters cast 8 percent of all ballots or about 8.35 million votes. In 1996 African American voters cast 10 percent of all ballots or about 9.58 million votes. This is an increase of 1.2 million votes. In the presidential race, 84 per-

cent voted for Clinton and only 12 percent for Dole. The African American vote amounted to 17 percent of Clinton's vote, up from 15 percent in 1992. African American and Latino trade unionists voted 91 percent for Clinton, 8 percent for Dole and 1 percent for Perot (Hart). In some of the more hotly contested Congressional races, African Americans voted nearly 100 percent against the right.

The number of African American members in the 105th Congress will be one less than the 104th. This does not represent a loss in the struggle for equality and representation because arch conservative Black Republican Congressman Gary Franks lost his seat to liberal Democrat Jack Moloney in Connecticut's 5th CD. Franks was an enthusiastic supporter of the Contract and an apologist for the Bell Curve. He refused to join the Congressional Black Caucus. William Clay called Gary Franks "a Negro Dr. Kevorkian, a pariah, who gleefully assists in suicidal conduct to destroy his own race." His defeat is a step forward and a major blow to the Republican Party's Black Republican Strategy. They were out to split and weaken the unity of the African American vote in order to aid the election of right wing candidates. It says a lot that African American voters in Franks district voted overwhelmingly for his opponent.

The efforts of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Rainbow led by Jesse Jackson, Junior and Senior, Black churches and fraternal organizations were all in alliance with labor and mobilized to register the maximum vote against the right. There was no great love for Clinton in these efforts. Their efforts, like the efforts of most working class voters in 1996, were fueled by the necessity to stop the threat from the right.

According to the VNS, the Latino turnout increased substantially from 1992 when it was 3 percent (3.13 million) to 5 percent (4.8 million) in 1996. In fact, fueled by the vicious attack on immigrant rights, the Latino movements went all out and, along with labor, mobilized a massive voter registration and education effort. On November 5th, they voted strongly against the right. This led to important victories, in particular the strategic defeat of Bob Dornan, the arch conservative from Orange County in California.

BLACK, BROWN AND WHITE UNITY ■ In this election there was a higher level of Black, Brown and white unity. Unity was decisive in determining the

outcome of this election. In the 1992 presidential race Black and Latino voters were only 19.7 percent of Clinton's total. In 1996, almost one in four of Clinton's total was cast by Black and Latino voters, 24.4 percent of his overall vote.

When the vote is looked at in class terms the picture is even clearer. The votes Clinton received from Labor, African Americans and Latinos were more than half of his vote. He could not have won without them. Further, the class composition of African American and Latinos voters is overwhelmingly working class. A solid multiracial working class electoral alliance came to the polls and registered a powerful vote against the threat from the right. It took an anti-racist, pro-working class alliance of voters, with labor at its foundation, to win. There are great lessons in the experience of the 1996 electoral struggle, lessons about the need for unity class unity in general and class unity against racism in particular.

In this post-election period it is important to remind Clinton that it was the working class, labor and the racially oppressed who elected him and that's who he must respond to first and foremost.

Women voted overwhelmingly for Clinton. On election day Clinton received 55 percent of the women's vote to Dole's 37 percent. Among trade union women Clinton received 72 percent of the vote to Dole's 21 percent and Perot's 1 percent. Pre-election polls gave the Democrats as much as a 20 point edge in the women's vote for President. By November 5th, the gap had closed considerably among well off women but was huge among working class women, especially trade union women. When it came to the vote for Congress, Women with incomes of \$15,000 - \$30,000 voted 60 percent for Democrats, up from 50 percent in 1994. The so-called "soccer moms" that so much was written about turned out to be only about 6 percent of the electorate vote according to Democratic pollster Mark Mellman. Mellman also argues that the gap is based more on economic issues than anything else. "Lower income men supported Clinton. The wealthiest women did not."

DEFEATS FOR THE RIGHT ■ There were outstanding battles against the right that need to be mentioned. Again of great importance is the defeat of one of the leading lights of the new right, seven term Congressman. Bob Dornan of California. Dornan is as right wing and as extremist as they come.

He was defeated in Orange County, California, the 5th largest county in the nation and a traditional stronghold of the right, by Democrat Loretta Sanchez, a Mexican-American woman. This was a big psychological blow against the fascist danger. It's a warning to other right wing extremists. They are no longer safe, not even in a place like Orange County. Sanchez's victory, with solid help from Labor, and a big turn out of Mexican American voters is an inspiration to the whole country. The same goes for Rep. Cynthia McKinney who won 57 percent of the vote despite being forced to run in a newly redistricted, 65 percent white district in Georgia. There were also successful races run by Stanford Bishop (2nd CD Georgia) and Corrine Brown (3rd CD Florida). Like McKinney they were redistricted by the Supreme Court into majority white districts but built multiracial alliances and won. These were victories against racism and were won largely because of unity with labor. In McKinney's campaign, the building of a labor-African American alliance put emphasis on Black and white class unity. This is the most effective way to isolate the racists. For this kind of unity to be developing in the deep South is of great significance and may help usher in a new era of multiracial movements in that crucial part of the country. This could be the counterweight needed to offset the Republican right's electoral dominance and be a new basis to advance unionization and the election of more progressives, Black and white, to public office. This says a lot about what is possible with unity and correct tactics in the deep South.

The reelection of Senator Paul Wellstone in the state of Minnesota was of great importance also. Wellstone was the only member of the U.S. Senate up for reelection to vote against the anti-working class, racist "Welfare Reform Bill." It was a real test. He was a national target of the right who wanted him defeated because he is an unapologetic liberal ("too liberal" they charged).

In Long Island, New York the defeat of Dan Fresa, one of the Gang of 73, by Carolyn McCarthy was a big victory in a predominantly Republican district. Mrs. McCarthy, a nurse whose husband was shot and killed on the Long Island Railroad, rejected the racist hysteria and announced she was running for Congress because her Congressman was a strong supporter of the National Rifle Association. After realizing he had lost the election, Fresa was reportedly so demoralized on election

night that he never showed up at his campaign headquarters.

In New Jersey, a swing state, Robert Torricelli, who never mentioned his anti-Cuban bill, soundly defeated Dick Zimmer for U.S. Senate and Martini, a member of the Gang, was defeated by Pascrell in the 8th CD. There was also the defeat of Gang member, Gary Franks in Connecticut by James Maloney.

In Ohio, Dennis Kucinich won despite a vicious red baiting campaign directed against him. His opponent, Martin Hoke, was one of the 73. Hoke tried to use the fact that Rick Nagin, the district organizer of the Ohio Communist Party, was active in Kucinich's campaign. Kucinich's response to their red baiting was to say, "No, Karl Marx is not running my campaign but Harpo Marx must be running theirs." He got a big laugh and went on to win. Labor played a major role.

In Illinois the defeat of wealthy rightist Al Salvi by Richard Durbin for the U.S. Senate was an important setback for the Republicans. In addition, the election of Blagojevich, who soundly defeated Gang member Flanagan, took back Rostenkowski's old seat. Sen. John Kerry won over Gov. Weld in Massachusetts. James McGovern running in the 3rd CD in Massachusetts defeated Peter Blute. He campaigned against the cuts in Medicare. His slogan was "If you wouldn't vote for Newt, why vote for Blute." McGovern won by seven points. Gang member Dick Chrysler was defeated in Michigan. Despite the disappointing reelection of Jesse Helms over Harvey Gantt in North Carolina, Funderburk and Heineman, two freshmen Republicans, went down to defeat.

The election of women Democrats Janet Shaheen as governor in the conservative state of New Hampshire, and Mary Landrieu as U.S. Senator from Louisiana, was a significant setback for the right as was the election of Democrat Gary Locke, the first Asian American governor on the mainland, as governor of Washington State. In the race for House all but three Democratic incumbents won and most Republican Senate victories were in open seats. Bernie Sanders, the one Socialist in the U.S. Congress won by a large margin in Vermont.

They did not win everything but from the beginning the momentum was with Labor and the Democrats. When you add up the victories and the near victories, it is clear the "Labor 96" campaign could have achieved the total defeat of the right

wing majority in the House. It was possible. The question is, why did it fall short?

LABOR YES, MACHINE NO ■ As a senior GOP campaign official put it right after the election, "It has always been a battle against labor. Without them, we would have blown the Democratic Party away."

In a lot of races the Democratic machine didn't believe they could win or didn't want to win. They failed to put up the money and organization to make victory possible. That was the case in the fight for Prop 209. Even with Clinton's opposition, 34 percent of his voters voted for it. We saw it on Staten Island and in Brooklyn with Tyrone Butler running against Susan Molinari. The same thing happened to Connie De Julius in Maryland. She had labor support but little machine support.

Victories against the right were won when progressive candidates built independent (independent of the Democratic Party machine) grass roots organizations with labor at its base. Both Wellstone and Kucinich put 5,000 grass roots workers in the field. When Carolyn McCarthy thanked her supporters, labor was at the top of the list. The successful races against the right were won by volunteers working in the grass roots, educating and mobilizing voters and building broad unity with labor-Black, Brown and white unity.

Labor spent \$25 million on TV ads and \$10 million on street mobilization. Greater efforts in the streets may have been needed. Especially when compared to what the Christian Coalition did. They ran a real stealth campaign. You heard very little from them, but in the last days of the campaign they distributed 45 million pieces of literature in over 125,000 churches. Ralph Reed said they were responsible for increasing the Republican majority in the Senate and saving a lot of House seats. When he explains his tactic, Reed sounds more like a CIA assassin than a religious leader. "I want to be invisible...I paint my face and travel at night. You don't know it's over until you're in a body bag. You don't know until election night." (from an ad in *The Nation*). These cold blooded words sound like a psycho assassin, not a preacher.

This is what we are up against. While they presently have a stronger grass roots organization than progressive forces do, they can be overcome with the stronger grass roots forces of labor, civil rights, youth and students.

Perot has obviously lost a lot of support since 1992. He played a vicious role especially in the last days of the campaign with his \$2 million hysterical attack on Clinton on the character issue. He emerged as the most reactionary of the three top presidential candidates. Perot's attack mobilized right wing voters against Clinton; in many cases mobilizing voters who were not going to vote. His Reform Party also intervened in a lot of Senate and Congressional races on the side of the Republicans. His 11th hour attack on Clinton help Dole more than himself because he was saying, "Stop Clinton at all cost."

ATTEMPTS TO MISLEAD ■ Perot worked to have a strong organized presence in some African American communities. Lenora Fulani fronted for him in that effort, including a scandalous ad appearing in the Black press with a picture of Du Bois, Malcolm X and Fulani appealing for votes for Perot. They must have had tens of thousands of dollars to freely spend. On election night in Harlem they had a huge mobile billboard 20 feet high of that same ad. The ad suggested that since Du Bois and Malcolm were independent they would look favorably towards Perot. This ad was a racist attempt to manipulate African American opinion and votes. Of course, neither Du Bois or Malcolm X would have supported Perot. Fulani's New Alliance Party has played that unscrupulous role throughout their history. Their efforts were not successful, since the vote for Perot actually dropped from 7 percent of the Black vote to 4 percent in 1996.

Fulani is now openly working with the right. Perot and Fulani's efforts also contributed to disarming and diverting voters from defeating the fascist danger.

The Nation of Islam and Ben Chavis met with Jack Kemp and invited the government agent and right wing provocateur, Lyndon Larouche, to speak at their Black Summit Meeting in St Louis (fortunately, he was booted off the stage). This was another effort to demobilize African American voters and help Dole at the polls. Louis Farrakhan's mass election eve rally at the United Nations drew 40,000 people, mostly African Americans. At that rally, Farrakhan advocated a stay-at-home vote. To advocate this position in the African American community on the eve of such a crucial election was capitulation to the worst forms of racism. Their position, no matter how militant the words sound, could only help the Republicans and the

right. Fortunately, the African American vote was more against the Republicans in 1996 than in 1992.

The gender and class divisions in the African American vote revealed itself in 1996. The VNS study showed that 1.6 million additional African American males came out to vote in 1996 compared to '92. The report says that some portion of the increase has to be attributed to the Million Man March in October '95. Even though 400,000 less African American women came out in '96 compared to '92, their numbers nevertheless equaled the number of Black males. African American women, however, voted 89 percent for Clinton while African American men gave him 78 percent. In 1996 Dole received 12 percent of the African American vote which was 1 percent higher than what George Bush received in 1992.

VOTER TURNOUT DECREASES ■ Why the lowest voter turnout in 72 years? I am not sure the low turnout can be blamed on apathy. The fact is there was a five million national increase in voter registration. In New Jersey over 400,000 new voters were on the rolls while in New York voter rolls grew by 10 percent since last April. If folks are conscious enough to register you cannot call them apathetic. There is an element of protest here. The alienation from the two dominant parties is a historic fact and it is growing. Although they are gaining strength, none of the progressive third parties have gained enough support to bring out voters in large numbers.

The fact that the media was constantly predicting Clinton's landslide may have taken the urgency out of this election for a lot of working class and racially oppressed voters. This same factor gave greater urgency to higher income voters to come out and vote against Clinton and support Republican Congressional candidates. In addition there was a substantial organized effort to cut down the vote.

It was not helpful that some on the left pushed the notion that no danger from right wing Republicans existed. When you examine the records of Clinton and Dole, the differences are not as sharp as when you compare the forces behind the two candidates. At the Democratic and Republican conventions you'd have to be politically asleep to not see big tactical differences. The two platforms were different, as were the class, racial and gender compositions of the two conventions. On some issues there are strategic differences as well. While both

parties are capitalist parties and both received big corporate money, the biggest corporate money went to Dole and the Republicans.

Looking at the biggest corporate contributors in the first quarter of '96 reveals a strong preference for the Republicans in this election. Corporations that gave to both parties (and most did) gave two to 10 times more to Republicans than to Democrats. The *New York Times* took a poll on election eve of the nation's top chief executive officers and well over 60 percent preferred Dole and a Republican-dominated Congress, even though nine out of 10 thought the economy was doing well under Clinton.

In the last days, on the eve of the election, there was a huge flow of money into the Republican camp. Rupert Murdoch gave \$1 million to the California State Republican Party. Another billionaire gave them \$500,000. There can be no doubt it was to save Dole from total humiliation and to help pass Proposition 209.

However, the main difference between the two parties was the fascist danger represented by the Republican ultra-right. A Republican victory would not have presented favorable conditions for the movement to go on the offensive.

The Nader campaign, unfortunately, published an ad saying that Dole and the Republican Party are not a fascist threat. It must be asked, are they waiting to see swastikas and brown shirts marching? Fascism U.S. style will not have those visible symbols.

The fascist danger is in the essence of the Republican proposals: their total subservience to U.S. transnationals; their total commitment to solving the crisis of capitalism on the backs of the working class and racial minorities and their total opposition to labor's rights, civil rights, civil liberties, women's rights and the basic welfare of the people.

Dole's proposal to cut income taxes by 15 percent, coupled with the cuts in the Contract, will mean a one-third cut in the federal budget.

To enforce such a drastic cut in social services will require a curtailing of democratic rights. Presently, the U.S. jails more of its population than any nation in the world. Such proposals will lead to even greater repression.

THIRD PARTY MOVEMENTS ■ We must study the Nader and Perot races. The Perot movement is in a decline, however he still has his Reform Party, a

gigantic ego and lots of money.

Nader was on the ballot in only 21 states, hardly campaigned, yet still received over 580,000 votes. This impressive vote shows the potential for political independents. Yet, the fact that his anti-corporate but not anti-capitalist stand did not include recognition of the fascist danger, or a strong stand against racism, was a major negative. He did not put the main attack against Dole. This is why 30 percent of Nader's voters in California also voted for Proposition 209.

The Labor Party could have been a major part of the AFL-CIO's Labor 96 campaign if they had not abstained from the elections.

What Danny Davis did in Chicago is a good example of how to build a third party movement, in a non-sectarian way. Davis, a Democrat, ran for Congress with the public support of the New Party and won overwhelmingly. Uniting progressive Democrats and independents is key to winning third party campaigns. This needs to be done in every state to build the base for a national party. Party building in the abstract, isolated from natural allies, is not a winning tactic.

ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY ■ Our role is best expressed by William Winpisinger. In a recent issue of the *PWW* he said, "The Party has played an important role in the elections this year." For a trade unionist of his stature to make that compliment publicly is historic in itself. It shows how our Party's role is gaining greater importance in the critical struggles of our time.

The Communist Party can be very proud of its contribution to this historic electoral struggle. We were part of the front-line fighters in state after state, race after race, helping to develop the strongest effort to defeat the right.

We boldly alerted people to the fascist danger. We saw the need to look at the lesser of two evils, not as a permanent tactic for all elections, not as a departure from our principals, but as a defensive tactic against the extreme proposals of the ruling class. We understood this was the only way to set the stage for a peoples' offensive in the post election period. Gus Hall's concept that "you can't be independent without fighting the Contract;" his raising the fascist danger in a mobilizing, not alarmist way; and the election eve slogan "Vote Because Your Life Depends On It" were major contributions to this struggle. The first challenge in

giving leadership is being able to give a political lead. We did that.

All together the Communist Party distributed nearly 250,000 pieces of its literature. The list of materials is very impressive.

We must not forget the outstanding role of the *People's Weekly World*. Our paper was the weekly journal of this movement. Every issue uplifted and rallied the people, especially labor, to organize and fight.

A number of districts issued their own election brochures on the challenges in their state. They issued additional leaflets exposing the right and calling on voters to vote, helping to convince tens of thousands to act. They in turn convinced others. We gave our material out at the Stand for Children demonstration and at the March for Immigrant Rights. We worked phone banks and registered thousands of voters. The breakthrough PWW labor banquets held in southern and northern California, Seattle, and Chicago were mobilization meetings to defeat the right. They had a big impact.

In numerous races across the country, the presence of our Party helped make the difference. If the New York district had not stepped in to help Tyrone Butler, he would not have gotten a respectable showing. He is now in position to make a stronger bid in the future.

We made the correct decision to not run a national ticket. However, two local Communist candidates ran. Frank Soifer received 5 percent of the vote running for mayor of Eugene, Ore. and David Mirtz received 2 percent running for state assembly in the Bronx. David's campaign was a courageous effort on the part of the candidate and his growing family, the district and the club.

His campaign should be judged not by votes, because votes are determined by how many voters you reach and the campaign didn't have the time or money to do that in a serious way, but by the responses of those who did hear David and the message of the Communist Party. It was a terrific response. More would be accomplished if we had run a campaign to win with the proper level of funds, organization and time. On average, you must reach your voters at least three times with your message in order to win their vote. That takes people, time, money and lots of shoe leather.

If we are convinced that a mass Party is possible in this period, then we have to have a mass winning approach to our election campaigns.

Now is the time to choose candidates, raise money and make plans for running Communist candidates in next year's election.

POST ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS ■ All across the country the Republicans, with some die hard exceptions, are on the defensive. This election showed they can lose their majority in Congress. It also showed that their program, "The Contract," is a liability because people don't support it. This election showed that the people will organize against the pro-big business extreme policies of the Republican Party. This election struggle also showed that the most formidable mass electoral/political force on the scene is organized labor and its allies. This force can bring them down.

This is why they want to prevent labor from continuing its election activities. Nothing more illustrates the new mood than the struggle around reelecting Newt Gingrich as Speaker of the House. Newt Gingrich, who two years ago was the shining light of the "Republican revolution," is now their biggest political liability. He has little support in the country and is a point of contention and division in his own party. He spent the largest amount of any Congressional candidate to win reelection and is now under serious charges for using tax exempt monies to promote his right wing "revolution." In the post election period, the Republican right is on the defensive.

Alphonse D'Amato is for calling off the White-water Hearings and he, Gingrich, New York Governor Pataki and New Jersey Governor Whitman are all trying to appear moderate, even liberal, in their public statements. This shows they know the election was a setback. Instead of giving up their program, they are coming forth with new tactics and approaches.

Labor and people's forces carried out a heroic effort against the right and saved the nation from catastrophe. They are inspired, optimistic and ready to continue the struggle. Clinton, with his Cabinet appointments and call for a coalition of the center, shows he is rejecting the mandate of this election. That mandate was to move away from the Contract and respond positively to the economic crisis of unemployment, declining income and racial injustice now confronting working families of this nation. His statements on the Welfare Bill, Medicare and Social Security are a disgrace.

The lesser of two evils was a tactic for the elections. Now is time to fight the right and to take the gloves off for Clinton as well.

This election broke all records for campaign spending. All told \$1.6 billion was spent on this years presidential and congressional races. Most of the money was spent by corporations. There is an effort by the Republicans to attack labor for spending \$35 million in this election. This is the height of hypocrisy. This year, corporations spent seven times what labor spent. The attack on Clinton for receiving money from foreign sources is not the main issue. The Republican Party is the worst at that. And our government is the biggest culprit when it comes to interfering in elections around the world. The main issue in Clinton's case is not that money came from foreign sources, but that it came from corporate sources that expect – and usually get – a big return on every dollar they invest.

It is time to outlaw corporate financial dominance of our electoral system. Individual financing with limits and public financing needs to become the main form. Why should millionaires be allowed to spend as much of their personal fortune as they want when they run for office? Does that not give a tiny percentage of our population more political power by virtue of their wealth?

LABOR AND LEGISLATIVE AGENDA ■ When asked about his assessment of labor's role in this election, Sweeney said, "We're happy we reelected the president. We're happy we won in a lot of Congressional races. But the real happiness is with ourselves – the real happiness is that we are developing energy and enthusiasm among workers." He said that labor has achieved its central goal in the 1996 election, "to reawaken and rebuild the sleeping labor giant."

The militant demonstration of 20,000 workers at the state capitol in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania speaks volumes about the reawakened giant. If this demonstration represents the mood of workers, then the post-election upsurge has already started. This is a moment to act. Recently there was a 24-hour hunger strike by 200 people, including a large number of Catholic nuns, protesting New York Gov. George Pataki's brutal welfare cuts. There is a new confidence among the people and greater will-

ingness to struggle. There are few illusions that Clinton is going to do the right thing on his own. This is a time to initiate struggle.

Clinton has promised to fix the welfare bill that he signed. Now he must be forced to do that. In truth this bill is too broken to fix, but the fight to stop the terrible consequences of it are key to its defeat. Almost everybody understands that to cut welfare, without the creation of millions of public sector jobs, will create a national catastrophe. Children will be the main victims. Therefore, in the 105th Congress we have a tremendous opportunity to push hard for the Martinez Jobs bill. The same goes for the effort to save public education from privatization. The recent expose of systemic corporate racism, along with the attacks on immigrants and church burnings, calls for new legislation to attack racism not only on the streets, but also at its source – in the corporate suites. We need a recommitment to civil rights by the federal government. We also need a new Bill of Rights for labor and a commitment to meet the health care crisis which becomes more catastrophic every day.

What we need is a Labor and Peoples' Legislative Agenda for 1997 and a lot of lobbying and street heat to make it a reality. We must reverse the great damage done by the 104th Congress to the rights and well being of the people.

This agenda must include:

- Eliminate the anti-poor and anti-immigrant "Welfare Reform Bill" and pass a new bill that grantees a livable income or a livable wage job.
- Pass the Martinez Bill.
- Pass a public education restoration bill that would restore all of the cuts in education made over the last decade.
- Pass new civil rights, immigrant rights and labor rights bills.
- Save Medicaid and Medicare and pass a universal health care act.

All of these measures would be paid for by cutting the military budget by one-half and taxing the rich. This program can be won through united struggle. The time is ripe. Its been a very exciting struggle and there is a lot more to come. We want to build a bridge to the 21st century also, but our bridge will be a bridge of peace, jobs, equality and socialism. □

Intellectuals and Trotskyites

Norman Goldberg

Briefly put, the so-called "New York Intellectuals" were a group of New York-based writers, philosophers, editors, critics and political activists with a background in the socialist movement of the 1920's. Most of them were Jews, who in their youth were influenced by the cosmopolitan and assimilationist views of the *Menorah Journal*, the most prominent Jewish intellectual publication of that time. Others tried to accommodate Zionism to socialism, while a number of hybrid outlooks flourished in between. In the 1930's a few joined the Communist Party, while others were supporters. Later, all of them left the Communist Party as they were attracted to Trotsky in his fight against Stalin and the Soviet Communist Party.

These individuals, soon to be called "The New York Intellectuals" became fervid adherents of Trotsky's Fourth International, members or supporters of the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party and Workers Party, the Socialist Party and assorted left-splinter groups forever at odds with each other. By the 1950s many became Cold Warriors, leaving Trotskyism for social democracy, liberalism, neo-conservatism and McCarthyism.

Among them were Max Eastman, a former Communist, a poet and journalist who was one of the first to promote Trotsky to writers and intellectuals; Sidney Hook, a philosopher and Communist-turned-Trotskyist who constantly tried to update Marxism by giving it an American face so he would be recognized as an original in the left; writers and critics like Edmund Wilson, Philip Rahv, Dianna and Lionel Trilling, Hannah Arendt, Elliot Cohen, Herbert Solow, Albert Goldman, Tess Slessinger, Felix Morrow, Eleanor Clark, James T. Farrell, Harvey Swados, Midge Decter, Norman Pokhoretz, Irving Kristol, Irving Howe and Mary McCarthy. There were also the art critics Meyer Schapiro, Dwight Macdonald, Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg and Hilton Kramer.

There were others, but these were the leading figures of the New York group. It should be kept

in mind that, all-in-all, these Trotskyist ideologues were small in number when compared to the many politically committed and fine writers, artists, poets, philosophers and critics who belonged to or were allied with the Communist Party. They and hundreds of others were part of the broad progressive intellectual front from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Trotskyism and "The New York Intellectuals" is a subject of interest, but it may be asked, what significance does it have for us today? It appears to be a period piece only, the dead news of yesterday. This may be so in a narrow sense, but in the larger Marxist sense of class struggle this subject is very much alive and it needs to be understood and fought. Trotskyism is the most advanced form of distorted Marxism. It miseducates and disorients many on the left today as it has done yesterday.

With the counterrevolutionary overthrow of socialism in Europe, Trotskyism has enjoyed a temporary renaissance as its followers rejoice in the counterrevolution, proclaiming that their mentor, Leon Trotsky has been proven right in his predictions 60 and 70 years ago. Essentially, the New York Intellectuals were reflections of Trotsky himself and a fuller understanding of this subject can best come from studying Trotsky, his history and his ideas, and why his charisma still entrances some people today. An in-depth study of this question from an historical and theoretical perspective will go much further in understanding Trotskyism than in dwelling on details and happenings only.

But one detail must be kept in mind. The political bottom line of Trotskyism, the one that kept its adherents overcharged with hatred, was "Stalinism," a term they turned into a curse word. It spilled over into hatred of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party, USA and all sympathetic mass organizations.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ▣ Now to the question from an historical perspective. Leon Trotsky entered the Russian Marxist revolutionary move-

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ment in 1896 and he found his way into the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), which was the umbrella organization of all the socialist groups in the country. The largest of these groups were the Bolsheviks, led by V.I. Lenin, followed by the next largest group, the Mensheviks, and a number of smaller sections. Trotsky could make no headway in leading or influencing the Mensheviks, who he thought to be too conservative. He was also opposed to the Bolsheviks, feeling them to be too dogmatic and projecting a discipline he refused to submit to.

TROTSKY AND BOLSHEVISM ■ For over 15 years, Trotsky steered a middle road between Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, trying to patch together an independent movement reflecting his views, and for 15 years he failed. In the RSDLP, Trotsky was known as a formidable speaker and debater with a magnetic personality, who easily became the dominant force in political discourse. He could impress many by his rhetorical flourish, his expertise on many subjects, from history and politics to literature and art. While he disliked certain features in the Bolshevik structure, he gravitated closer to them, sensing that they had the drive to make a revolution under the leadership of an organizing genius, Lenin. Trotsky was obviously aware of Lenin's political talents, and he was most likely envious of them. He found himself working with Lenin in many joint actions which he later described in his *History of the Russian Revolution* and in his autobiography *My Life*. In both books there was a subtle exaggeration of his collaboration with Lenin, where he minimized the real differences between them to make it appear that theirs was an association of two leading equals, with a healthy difference of views between two close comrades.

The facts are different. The facts show that they differed on a whole range of policy questions, as well as differences on strategy and tactics. Lenin described Trotsky's zigging and zagging to win support on both sides of a debate as something resembling the slithering motions of a snake, sliding from one side to another to make headway. The fact is that Trotsky finally joined the Bolsheviks only about five weeks before the October Revolution, when it became clear to him that the Bolshevik train was the only train in town, and that he'd better get aboard or be left behind. Lenin

wanted him to join, but insisted that he abide by the principles of democratic centralism - debate, vote and accept the majority decision without factional opposition.

But Trotsky violated these principles many times after he joined the Bolsheviks. He believed that a revolutionary party should have factions, where each faction could express a collective point of view and not be bound by majority rule. Factional freedom of expression and action or non-action he believed to be a true form of party democracy. He also claimed that Lenin agreed with most of this, but that factions were later opposed and made illegal under Stalin.

This is a lie. The opposite is true. In organizing the Bolshevik Party, Lenin concretely developed the rules and methods of democratic discussion along Marxist lines leading to the practice of democratic centralism. Lenin stressed free political discussion. He even encouraged political tendencies to be accepted but never organized or unorganized factions. These were allowed in the Menshevik Party and among the Anarchists and Nihilists. They were self-destructive actions that paralyzed the other parties, leaving them bogged down in endless contention. Lenin's position on factions appears very clearly many times in his collected works. Trotsky had twisted Lenin's favoring of political tendencies in the Bolshevik Party into one of favoring factions, claiming that this "democratic" feature was later destroyed by Stalin.

The fact is that Stalin carried out the Leninist policy of discussion and debate under the rules of democratic centralism, despite opposition and factionalism in some quarters during the difficult years following the revolution, years of socialist construction and consolidation.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION ■ Trotsky was a fiery revolutionary and a master of rhetorical flourish, who at times attempted to enter the realm of high theory. In 1905, he formulated a theory of permanent revolution, an idea he had picked up from Parvus, a leader of the early 1905 revolution in Russia. In Trotsky's theory, he foresaw that in Russia the bourgeois and the socialist revolutions would combine, merge and blend into a worldwide proletarian revolution, a seamless sequence of events without stop.

Lenin immediately saw the oversimplification and the danger of Trotsky's heady espousal of per-

manent revolution, and he counterpoised his own theory of socialist revolution, a theory that allowed for unevenness and paradoxical currents to affect the ebb and flow of revolutionary movement. Not a straight line as Trotsky argued, but a line that was subject to counterforce whose precise direction could not be carved in stone. This was a telling example of dialectical logic overcoming linear logic.

Later, Stalin pointed to other weaknesses in Trotsky's thesis, showing it to be narrowly proletarian and not allowing for the peasant role in socialist revolution. In a country like Russia revolution and socialist growth were impossible without peasant participation, with a peasant population of about 80 percent. Stalin further pointed out that Trotsky's theory revealed a distrust of the peasants, seeing in them a lack of collectivity, a people with a narrow private-property and anti-socialist mentality. This was shown again in the 1920's, the years of massive construction. Trotsky and his followers displayed their distrust of the peasantry, arguing that they be subject to military control. His ultra-proletarian zeal was blind to seeing the Russian peasant as an ally of the industrial working class, which under socialism would create an agricultural proletariat. His distrust of the peasantry stemmed from his disbelief in the possibility of building socialism in Russia or in any single country at a time.

REFUSAL TO CARRY OUT POLICY ■ Trotsky displayed an intoxicating belief in world revolution, a view that was largely shared by many Bolsheviks. As Commissar of Foreign Affairs, he was sent to Brest-Litovsk to sign a peace treaty with Germany. But he was dizzy with success. Instead of signing a peace treaty, he harangued the German generals with revolutionary speeches, denouncing them as agents of German capitalism and predicting a workers' uprising in Germany that would destroy them. His revolutionary rhetoric, "Neither peace nor war" went nowhere, as the Germans walked out and mounted a major offensive that caused severe losses in men and territory to the new Soviet state. Trotsky was replaced by Chicherin, who quickly accepted the best terms he could get.

Trotsky resigned his post over differences with Lenin on the peace treaty. He was opposed to signing any agreement with Germany that would leave capitalism intact. When a workers' uprising

did occur in Germany, Trotsky demanded that the Red Army be sent to Berlin to help overthrow the state. In this he was opposed by Lenin and the majority of the Soviet leadership as proposing a rash and irresponsible policy that would leave Soviet Russia vulnerable to German counterattack, probably with English, French and American support. The Soviet government was far too weak to undertake such an action, but Trotsky argued that, without such an action and the victory of a German workers' revolution, Soviet Russia itself would fall. He opposed the concept of socialism in one country as a Stalinist revision of Lenin, overlooking Lenin's highly developed theory of the uneven development of countries under capitalism and imperialism, unevenness that leads to the breakout of revolution in only one or two countries at a time, never in all countries at once.

Stalin, in his early debates with Kamenev, Zinoviev and other followers of the left opposition bloc, frequently quoted from Lenin's writings and speeches, showing that he, Lenin, firmly believed that socialism could be fully built in one country. Trotsky, in his twisting, first argued that this was not really Lenin's idea and that he was being misinterpreted. Later, Trotsky wrote that Lenin was wrong and that Stalin was capitalizing on this wrong interpretation of Lenin. History proved otherwise. Lenin and Stalin were right in that socialism was fully built in the Soviet Union, with Trotsky constantly firing broadsides, accusing Stalin of having turned the country into a deformed workers' state. These tirades, accompanied by Trotskyite pseudo-analysis were printed in a hundred varieties in the New York intellectual publications, *The New Leader*, *Partisan Review*, *Dissent*, *Commentary*, *New Criterion* and others.

The Bolshevik Party's struggle against Trotskyism can be traced back to the very beginnings of its formation as the truly revolutionary section of the RSDLP. There, in 1903 and 1904, the Bolshevik Party took shape as a new type of party, with a principled stand against all forms of opportunism and vacillation. As William Z. Foster noted, the Bolshevik Party was the most revolutionary detachment of the international labor movement.

The Bolshevik Party was formed at the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. It was led by Lenin in a bitter fight with the Mensheviks, Economists, Nihilists, Anarchists and the Trotskyist in-betweeners who maneuvered to

derail its formation. Trotsky worked feverishly to prevent the creation of a real revolutionary party. Together with the Mensheviks, Martov, Dan and Axelrod, he tried to pack the leading bodies of the RSDLP with anti-Bolsheviks. Later, he attempted to knock together an alliance with G.V. Plekhanov, a political opponent, with the same end in mind.

From the very start, Trotsky changed his views, depending on the circumstances, always spearheading his struggle against Lenin and the real revolutionaries. His general outlook and his ultimate purposes seemed difficult to pinpoint, but they made sense when seen as devices to achieve a situation where he could become leader. His inconsistencies and contradictory tactics, when placed against Lenin's stability, made this impossible.

Trotsky kept forcing endless discussions on the Soviet Party on a wide range of questions, provoking dissension and hampering work from going on. In the 1920s, a nationwide party vote was taken on the policies of the Bolshevik Party versus those of the Trotskyist opposition bloc. The Trotskyists were overwhelmingly defeated.

In 1925, after continued opposition and factionalism Trotsky was ousted from his position. Then after further provocations he was expelled from the Party and finally exiled from the Soviet Union in 1927. He went from Turkey to France, then Norway, finally settling in Mexico where he feverishly worked to organize an international anti-Soviet front from the left. In this he was supported by his official followers in the Socialist Workers Party: James Cannon, Max Shachtman, James Burnham, George Breitman, Joseph Hansen and others. It also occasioned a spate of writings and declarations by the New York crowd on the rescue of true Communism from Stalinist distortions. Edmund Wilson, James T. Farrell, Dwight Macdonald, Max Eastman and others rallied to the cause, while Sidney Hook lorded it over them, claiming to be the original Marxist from whom a new philosophy was to be developed. This never happened.

ON LITERATURE AND ART ■ The particular point of contention that attracted the New York Intellectuals was Trotsky's position on literature and art, a specialty that was dear to their hearts. Trotsky had a following of left dissident artists whom he believed to represent the aesthetic spirit of the new

revolutionary age, and not time-servers who bent to party dictates. He believed the true test of art was based on independent observation and creation. He found this truth in the surrealist poetry of Andre Breton, in Dadaist painting (which he never fully understood) and in the dissident modernism of Russian Futurist, Symbolist and Constructive painting. He wrote prodigiously about the inherently rebellious nature of art against society, never properly tracing the class origins of modernism from a socioeconomic perspective, but only from a left-aesthetic one. He never fully explored the characteristics within modernist protest art and its failure to communicate.

Protest without communication failed to reach its target, became an empty exercise that eventually turned inward, becoming an ivory tower of elitist isolation. The emergence of the working class onto the center stage of history demanded mature responsibilities from all art, and from the mass bottom-up, not from the elitist top-down.

In the autumn 1938 issue of *The Partisan Review*, a New York-based Trotskyist cultural organ that was set up to counter the success of *New Masses*, editors Philip Rahv and William Phillips published Trotsky's manifesto: "Towards a Free Revolutionary Art," where he started by saying that not a single progressive idea in politics as well as in art ever began with a mass base. He contended that the struggle for revolutionary ideas in art must begin with the struggle for artistic truth, which most would agree with, but with him it was turned into artistic struggle against the Soviet Union and Stalin. This, fundamentally, was the ideological platform that masked the political thrust of Trotskyism in the arts.

Such Trotskyist assertions that art that was true to itself was free from manipulation and corruption proved false. Trotsky's manifesto on art fell on its face under the onslaught of commercialism in the 1950's, which, in league with the anti-Communist Cold War, saw a buck in narcissistic and obscurantist modernism. It is curious that novelists like Edmund Wilson, Mary McCarthy, James T. Farrell and Harvey Swados, all sympathizers with Trotsky's political views, avoided his artistic views in their work. In contrary fashion, a number of American abstract painters who were attracted to Trotsky's artistic views were opposed to his politics. Trotsky was not an out-and-out modernist. He was well versed in the classics and

he enjoyed realist literature and art. But when he professed to see beauty and truth in writing and painting that was the fancy of a few, he had gone astray.

In 1939, *Partisan Review* editor Philip Rahv turned his concept of art into a weapon against the Popular Front Alliance of Communist and liberal-progressive writers, whom he accused of degenerating into what he called "literary patriots." Here, Rahv and the New York literary clique were echoing Trotsky's opposition to the internationally formed Popular Front alliance against fascism. This front was organized as a result of the 7th Congress of The Communist International in Moscow. The Popular Front, according to The New York intellectuals, was a surrender to capitalism in the name of fighting fascism. Sidney Hook, Max Eastman, Elliot Cohen and Irving Kristol denounced the Popular Front and organized political demonstrations against it.

Taking their cue from the Patron Saint, they said that any struggle against fascism that was not coupled to a struggle against capitalism was a sell-out of working-class revolution. This was unadulterated political purism. Had Trotsky's subjectivism been followed, it would have resulted in an ultra-left fight against fascism and capitalism with 90 percent of the people left out. It would have meant no struggle.

In their writings during the 1930's, The New York intellectuals were ambiguous in their approach to fascism. They were alarmed by the anti-Semitic atrocities in Germany and elsewhere. But they were caught in the ideological trap of anti-Sovietism and anti-Stalinism, and their political line was bogged down in the mud of a so-called "third road" of struggle. After the war, those like Irving Howe, Irving Kristol and Norman Pokhoretz went to xenophobic lengths, denouncing Communists, liberals and all other "traitors" who were against the U.S.-instigated Cold War. By 1947, former Trotskyite Irving Kristol, now de-radicalized with a turn to religion, became managing editor of the anti-Communist magazine *Commentary*. In 1953 he made this statement in *Commentary*: "There is one thing the American people know about Senator McCarthy; he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing."

Much can be said about the Trotskyist role in the Spanish Civil War, but it can only be touched on. There they formed a Workers Party of Marxist Unification, or POUM, a comparatively small force of assorted anti-Communist leftists, dissidents and Anarchists who claimed to be fighting fascism, but whose actual role served as a rear-guard movement against the Spanish government, the Republican Army, the International Brigades and all Communists. In effect, it served as a left fifth column for Franco. While occasionally fighting small skirmishes, it issued leaflets, posters and other papers that called for both the defeat of Franco and the overthrow of the Spanish government, another absurd Trotskyite pipedream.

The New York intellectual faithful swallowed Trotsky's prediction, made from Mexico, that, after the forthcoming World War, the workers would arise all over Europe, overthrow capitalism and Stalin's government and establish a socialist workers union of Europe as the beacon of the world revolution, another prediction that evaporated into thin air as reality showed otherwise.

MOVE TO THE RIGHT □ This new reality, the growth of socialism in Europe, new China, North Korea, Vietnam, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements, all these were the living facts that threw the Trotskyites into despair. The New York intellectuals began to go their separate ways, almost all of them swept into the service of the Cold War, hand-picked by the government because of their "expertise" in fighting Communism. They earned their credentials as informers, witchhunters, spies and liars for trade unions, schools, publishing companies, Hollywood, television and anywhere else they could be used.

By the 1960's, many of them had moved to the right, trying hard to blot out or deny their Trotskyist past. They denounced the New Left movement of the time, the Black freedom struggles and the anti-Vietnam war demonstrations. Many became Republicans, supporting Nixon and, later, Reagan. They had become bitter enemies from the right as they had once been from the left. Some, like Irving Howe, returned as "independent" liberals and others emerged as semi-Zionists.

To sum up this part a twin question may be asked. What was there in Trotsky that attracted this fervent group of intellectuals to his cause, and

why couldn't they maintain a unity between them?

The first and obvious answer was that Trotsky had the credentials of being a Soviet leader, second in command under Lenin in the revolution. In earlier 1917, Trotsky was in New York, where he became a well-known figure among socialist groups. Later, during and after the October Revolution, many in the United States having never heard of Lenin, thought Trotsky to be the leader of the revolution. Then there was his intellect and charm, his sharp wit, quick verbal comebacks and his charismatic personality. Then again, there was Trotsky in exile, the prophet without honor, the underdog, the lone figure standing up against the whole Soviet state.

Why was there no sustained unity of outlook and action among them? The answer lies in the basic organizational flaw in Trotskyism itself, a flaw that idealized independent intellectual Marxist individualism, whatever that meant. It inevitably meant acrimonious debate, factionalism and splits in the name of freedom. It kept Trotskyism a very small sect on the left. At one time they proudly announced their national membership to be 1650 people, although the membership was split into two rival groups of approximately equal numbers. The Communist Party's membership at the same time was about 70,000, while in Europe the Communist ratio was much higher.

PETTY-BOURGEOIS RADICALISM TODAY ■ Trotskyist smallness comes from its dogmatic and purist lines, making it hostile to mass actions. When they undertake coalition action it is not to work with other organizations on a common program, but to burrow from within and try to take over. By their tactics Trotskyites have caused damage to trade unions and mass organizations even causing near destruction, as happened some years ago to the National Organization of Women. They also disrupted a local in the Transit Workers Union in New York, and recently created severe difficulties in the Pastors for Peace program of sending supplies to Cuba. Trotskyism surfaces in mass organizations with a hidden agenda that is out of touch,

far-fetched, ultra-left and divisive, lessons from their teacher.

In recent years the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party has downplayed Trotsky as a figure to be studied and worshiped. They are attempting to accommodate their group to new times, but they still retain and practice exclusivism, remain small, and perpetuate divisiveness. Trotskyism was once a political current on the left, primarily for middle-class intellectuals. Today it has become largely irrelevant.

Ideologically, however, Trotskyism is very much alive today. It is distorted Marxism, unbalanced and unscientific. It has run the gamut of every kind of contorted leftism: dogmatism, talk-mudism, anarchism, scholasticism and general ultra-leftism. It postures with a working-class face while it is neck-deep in petit-bourgeois individualism. I believe that Trotskyism will continue to exist in one form or another as long as there is capitalism.

To conclude, the Trotskyites, the New York intellectuals and others, have always fashioned a scenario that presented their idol as Lenin's closest and most trustworthy co-worker. This has been disproven many times and, in a current biography of Trotsky, the author took a number of rare documents out of the archives in Moscow that reveal Lenin's opinion of his "co-worker." They are not flattering. As an example, one note states that, while Trotsky was knowledgeable on literary and artistic matters, when it came to politics he simply didn't have a clue.

And, as a last touch, there is this interesting comment made by Lenin in an interview with H. G. Wells, the British novelist and utopian socialist. When Wells asked Lenin what he thought of Trotsky, Lenin answered that Trotsky did notable work in organizing the Red Army during the October Revolution and leading military campaigns in the civil war. Then he paused and thought, saying that there was something remote about Trotsky. He was too self-assured, too quick to talk, too impatient to listen. Then these words: "He was with us, but he was not one of us." □

Two Aspects of the Struggle for Equality

Joe Sims

In August, on the eve of the Democratic Party convention, President Clinton signed into law a bill eliminating welfare. With one stroke of the pen, Clinton approved a major plank in Newt Gingrich's Contract on America and ended a half-century of commitment to assist the poorest of the poor.

The elimination of "welfare as we know it" was a major blow to poor people in general and to African Americans in particular. It was a major blow to children in general and particularly Black and Latino children, two-thirds of whom receive some form of government assistance, much of which will be eliminated by this legislation.

The effects will be devastating. Mass hunger will stalk the land; homelessness will rise dramatically; death at an early age will become an even grimmer reality in the ghettos and barrios of this country.

However, as horrible as the effects will be, the overall impact will reach far beyond its immediate victims. With the passing of the Welfare Reform Act, the ruling class knocked away a major conceptual pillar of government policy since the New Deal: the very concept of government responsibility to assist those who cannot help themselves – that is what the elimination of entitlements are all about. Thus the elimination of welfare is just the opening battle in what will be an all-out war on Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Gus Hall has aptly described this as the creation of a new leaner, meaner capitalism without entitlements – capitalism in the 21st century.

The sad fact of the matter is that welfare was eliminated with scarcely a peep. The sad fact is that, in the face of the ultra-right drive to eliminate this life-line to millions of people, most did nothing. Where were the liberals in the fight to save welfare? They did what liberals normally do when under pressure – they moved to the right and voted for the bill. And the children's organizations, where were they? They held a few press conferences, but that was about it. And notwithstanding the impor-

tant changes that have occurred in the labor movement – changes that will alter the political landscape of the country – labor was not yet able to do much either.

And even in the African American Equality movement, little if anything was done. True the NAACP deplored it, the Urban League decried it, Rev. Jackson spoke out against it, but precious little was done to organize opposition to this legislation. In fact, as the debate heightened on Capital Hill, the silence was deafening.

To appreciate the degree of the problem we should recall that in the very days that the bill was being debated and voted on, a million Black men marched on Washington. Yet scarcely a word was said by the march organizers in preparing for the march, or by Louis Farrakhan at the march, about this issue.

What was needed was a national movement to save welfare – what we got was national indifference.

How can we account for this massive failure on all sides? Why the inability or refusal to act, why the silence and seeming indifference? Was it just plain old-fashioned racism? Or just apathy? Or is something else at work here?

Clearly racism is a factor among some, but that doesn't explain the lack of initiative among Blacks. And certainly apathy is significant, but that doesn't explain the lack of initiative in the ranks of activists. And organizers, activists, and different organizations were involved in a whole host of struggles during this period.

BILLION DOLLAR IDEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGN ■ Clearly one doesn't have to look far to find the answer. Welfare was not defended because welfare is not popular. We do not like welfare. And we do not like it because we have been taught not to. Welfare has been the subject of a long-term systematic multi-billion dollar ideological campaign to undermine and defeat it.

We have been convinced that welfare is a bad thing and an evil thing. The people of this country have been subjected to such concepts as welfare

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"breeds dependency," welfare creates a "culture of poverty" and a huge "underclass" that is inhabited by criminals, dope fiends, and "welfare mothers."

Racism is clearly a major factor in this effort. An important part in this racist schema is played by putting forward the ideology of blame-the-victim. In this case the victims of racism are blamed for the problems created by racism itself.

This blame-the-victim ideology basically plays the role of letting the system off the hook. Blame-the-victim lets capitalism get away with murder. Instead of capitalism or racism being the source of the problem faced by Black people, Blacks themselves are the problem. Instead of a people facing problems, we become the problem.

WHO'S TRICKING WHOM? ■ The acceptance of this blame-the-victim ideology by a wide spectrum has become an enormous problem in our country. As a function of racism this problem is very clear. However, it plays a more insidious role when it operates as an ideological trend within the African American community itself. And, unfortunately, blame-the-victim concepts are developing wide currency – even within the African American equality movement.

According to this point of view, the main problem facing the Black community is to be found within the community itself. In other words, we are our greatest enemy. We don't support ourselves; we are not unified – we suffer from a lack of self-love. We don't respect Black women; we don't care for our children. Thus the main problem is that Black men are irresponsible. Black men are miserable, sick and in need of healing.

That's the problem. The solution? More responsibility – stop using drugs and running the streets. Forgiveness should be sought and atonement rendered.

Now what is wrong with this picture? What's wrong is that Newt Gingrich and the ruling class find themselves in complete agreement with these views. This was never clearer than when Gingrich and Jack Kemp began saying, "Black men irresponsible? Why that's what we've been saying all along."

Racism is no longer responsible; capitalism is no longer responsible; society is no longer responsible – we are ultimately the cause of our own failings.

What is wrong is that ultimately the ruling class is absolved of its responsibility for racism. And, if

racism is no longer a factor, then all anti-racist remedies are no longer needed. If racism is not responsible for job discrimination, then why have affirmative action? If racism is not responsible for poverty, then why have welfare?

And thus you see a great disdain from all of these forces for any and all government programs. They don't solve Black people's problems – they perpetuate them.

FIRST FRONT: NATIONAL JOBS CAMPAIGN ■ Given these problems, one cannot fight racism in today's world without fighting the effects of the welfare bill. And one cannot effectively carry on this fight without undertaking both a political and ideological struggle against it. That means rejecting the racist blame-the-victim ideology, no matter what its source. That also means fighting to reverse this law and not giving in to the idea that nothing can be done.

We must recall that a third of all African Americans live at or below the poverty level. Close to half live near poverty. Literally half of all Black children depend on welfare for survival – two-thirds receive some form of federal assistance. And it is this half of the population from whom the ruling class is pulling the rug from underneath their feet.

One cannot talk seriously about achieving equality without dealing with this poorest half of the Black population. Their economic status must be at the center of our concerns. And in this situation the only way to deal with their economic status is to provide jobs. That's why people are on welfare in the first place – there aren't enough jobs. And, if business won't do it, then the government has to be forced to. We must build a national movement for public works jobs.

Now an interesting thing has happened in the last few months since the signing of the bill. There is a growing groundswell of support for jobs legislation. The *New York Times* has come out in favor of it. William Julius Wilson is in favor of it. And now the Urban League has taken the same position.

The Communist Party has long supported this concept and we have worked with others to introduce such legislation into Congress. And in fact there is currently legislation in Congress that would do just that – the Martinez job bill. The time has come to build a national movement for the passage of this legislation. Ironically, because of this welfare

bill, the fight for public works jobs can be undertaken on a much broader basis. We must be part of this effort.

SECOND FRONT: THE RACIST WAGE GAP ■ A second issue in the struggle for equality is closing the racist wage gap. The wages of Black workers are 27 percent below the wages of whites. This racist wage gap is a continuing persistent feature of economic racism. The reason is that it remains an enormous source of superprofits.

However, there is a new ruling-class campaign that is attempting to convince us that significant gains have been made. The *New York Times* recently bragged that the wages of Black married couples is 87 percent of whites, up from 79 percent several years ago. They also bragged that Black poverty had dipped just below 30 percent and that Black unemployment was momentarily below 10 percent for the first time in a quarter century.

Vic Perlo, in a letter to the *New York Times*, pointed out that the paper neglected to mention that the percentage of Black married couples declined from 50 to 46 percent and that the absolute numbers also fell. They also failed to mention that Black family median income fell to 57 percent of whites, down one percentage point. And while it is true that Black unemployment fell to 9.9 percent in October '95, the authors of the *New York Times* article failed to point out that it rose to 10.9 in October '96.

What no one talks about is that the real unemployment figures are double the official numbers and that African American unemployment remains at twice the unemployment rate for whites. Combating racism in the economy and eliminating the wage gap remain a central challenge of our times.

These two issues, dealing with unemployment by providing public works jobs and closing the racist wage gap, are two basic challenges of our times. They are the two main foundation-stones that must be laid for significant progress toward equality. Address these concerns and real progress can be secured – ignore them and you court disaster.

Finally, no treatment of the struggle for equality would be complete without considering the political side of the question. How can such a jobs campaign be achieved and the wage gap removed? Is possible to do this, given the present composition of the Congress?

Prior to the election, the Communist Party maintained that a prerequisite for achieving progress in

the struggle for equality was removing the fascist-tinged ultra-right forces' grip on Congress. We contended that there could be no progress in the struggle for equality without defeating Gingrich and the Republican Contract on America. Achieving this is central to progress on all questions.

While gains were made in the November elections and the ultra-right's margin of victory was narrowed, this largely remains true in the post-election period as well. The November election signified a checking of the fascist danger for now. The elections represented a significant blunting of their drive to capture all three branches of government and a slowing of momentum.

None of the forces who contended for power will be the same in the face of these elections. The Republicans will not be the same. In order to win, they had to pull back from the Contract – in fact, they ran away from it. They will now come back repackaged but with the same agenda. The labor movement will never be the same. And that was and is the main story in the elections. For the first time labor played an active role in attempting to defeat the most right-wing extreme forces and succeeded in defeating 18 of them. The development of a more class-struggle posture in the labor movement is the most important element in politics in this country today.

And the African American equality movement will not be the same. The labor/Black alliance was at a new level in these elections.

An important election result was the fact that all of the members of the Congressional Black caucus whose districts had been redrawn because of racist challenges won reelection. Many of them received up to 35 percent of the white vote. This was a major setback to the forces of racism and the ultra-right. It must be built on for the future.

The main thing that we have to keep our eye on is the class and social forces that were set in motion. The working class and the oppressed peoples are more active and on more issues than ever before, and that will lay the basis for changing the political map in this country. The main thing now is to strengthen their unity in action. The main thing is to build our united front relations.

And, while doing so, we must continue to build the Communist Party and build the strength of the left and independent forces. And with that we will be in a better position to fight and win lasting victories. □

The 1996 Elections in India

Vijay Prashad

The 1996 elections in India had an unsatisfactory result. For 13 days, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the organ of theological fascism, ruled and then, before a no-confidence vote, the party resigned.

After the BJP resigned a new coalition of political parties calling themselves the United Front (UF) staked a claim to governance. The origins of this coalition can be traced to the late 1980s, when a group of secular parties who represent fractions of the regional bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie and lower castes worked together under the rubric of the National Front. This uneasy confederacy of political parties formed the United Front.

The president of India accepted the government and H. D. Dewe Gowda of the Janata Dal party became the Prime Minister. In the midst of the negotiations, the National Front and liberal opinion turned to Jyoti Basu of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) – who has been the Chief Minister of West Bengal in a Left Front government since 1977 – to accept the position of prime minister.

The CPM's Central Committee, after extended deliberations, concluded that its minority (32 members of Parliament out of the 269 United Front parliamentarians) would not allow it leverage in the government. The Central Committee, drawing from CPM's experience in the United Front government in West Bengal from 1967-70, argued that, given the balance of forces arrayed against the Party, it would not be able to direct the government and would act as the proxy of a designless ensemble. Given this scenario, the CPM opted to offer outside and independent support to the United Front government. The Communist Party of India (CPI), however, joined the government shortly after it took office and won two Cabinet posts (Indrajit Gupta, a veteran parliamentarian and leader of the party, is the current Home Minister).

A brief history of some developments will

shed light on these important changes in India.

In 1947, British colonial rule over South Asia ended and in 1950, India adopted its Constitution. The new state committed itself to the contradictory liberal task of producing equality and preserving the privileges of those who own the means of production (the financial and industrial bourgeoisie, the landlords, the aristocracy). Infrastructural development is expensive and non-remunerative in terms of private industrial enterprise, so the bourgeoisie acceded to the state's adoption of these sectors. The state was to prepare the groundwork for private enterprise. Further, by a series of tariffs, the state was entrusted to protect Indian commerce and industry from the caprices of imperial finance capital. The Congress Party, which controlled the Indian state from 1947 until the late 1960s, broached the subject of land reform (under pressure from peasant rebellions and the combined Communist parties), but did not conduct it extensively. Nor did it attempt to increase food and grain production by improved irrigation, land endowments nor by the transfer of political power to the peasantry.

Imports from the U.S., under a scheme wherein the U.S. exported surplus wheat at inflated prices under the condition that domestic agriculture will be tutored by U.S. foundations (called the PL-180 scheme), and other such imperialist measures – including food "aid" – enabled the state to ignore the agrarian question. In 1961, Prime Minister Nehru noted bitterly that "large numbers of people have not shared in [the increase in the nation's wealth, since] the new wealth is flowing in a particular direction" – towards the bourgeoisie and the landlords. His death, in 1964, came on the heels of two major droughts which terminated the liberal efforts of the state.

Two awful crop years (1965-66 and 1966-67), the oil shocks in the early 1970s and the global recession from 1967 onwards set in motion the organic crisis which led to major international efforts to restructure capital. Thatcherism. Reaganism, Kohlism, etc. are national labels of a phenom-

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enon common to the advanced capitalist nations. The solution in the advanced capitalist nations was to gut the welfare state to renegotiate the gains made by labor by violently and ideologically breaking unions (in Britain, the miners' strike and in the U.S. the air-traffic controllers' strike), to implement tax shelters and tax breaks for the plutocracy and to reduce its tax burden in anticipation of increased investment for growth (supply-side economics). The workers' movement responded to capital's stabilization measures with an unsatisfactory call for better redistribution policies rather than a reconstruction of capitalist relations of production, itself the germ of the crisis.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank attempted to export the effects of the crisis onto the Third World by the Structural Adjustment Program. IMF fundamentalism amounts to the following measures for the Third World (and, after 1989, Eastern Europe) which ensure that capital flows find an outlet in financial speculation: devaluation of currency, end to state subsidy of any sector (notably social welfare), suspension of tariffs and trade restrictions for foreign companies, end to price controls (including for foodstuffs), liberalization of financial markets, privatization of state-held concerns, compression of real earnings (by the elimination of inflation bonuses) and promotion of exports at all costs. These measures led to the management of capitalism's endemic crisis of relative overproduction and the tendency to stagnation. For the Third World and the "weak reeds" of the advanced capitalist nations (the working-class and the unemployed), stabilization amounted to starvation.

EFFECT ON INDIA ■ Multinational companies and the domestic bourgeois-landlords flocked to the auction of India's national wealth. The Congress government in the 1970s and 1980s destroyed India's balance of payments position by its encouragement of unproductive imports (consumer goods, military hardware) and engineered such a crisis that in 1991 the Indian government had to airlift 47 tons of gold to Britain as security against a short-term loan of \$400 million from the Bank of London. India had only two weeks of foreign exchange revenues left.

Liberalism is expensive, since it means that the state must be populist for the masses as well as the protector of privilege for the bourgeoisie and the

landlords. Given this bind, the bourgeois-landlord state attempted various strategies to reassert rule in the midst of major political unrest by the working class and the peasantry (led by the Communist parties), and various other social forces in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1975, the Congress Party, under Indira Gandhi, dispensed with parliamentarianism and tried to manage the crisis without the niceties of democracy. Indira Gandhi couched the move in radical terms. She proposed to combat the right (the theological fascists) and the left (the Maoists) as well as uphold the people's rights which were being squandered by the bureaucracy and by corruption. To cement her "radicalism," Gandhi canceled compensation payments to the dethroned aristocracy, nationalized the banks and signed the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty in 1971. The CPI supported Gandhi's undemocratic emergency regime (1975-77), while the CPM joined the mass struggles to reinstate democracy.

The democratic movement culminated in the formation of a rival bourgeois party, the Janata or People's Party (out of disgruntled Congress members, theological fascists, Gandhian socialists and human rights activists) which won the elections of 1977. The CPI acknowledged its error and shed those elements who called for continued support to the Congress, thereby facilitating extensive joint actions alongside the CPM. The organic crisis did not disappear with the 1977 election. Instead, the Janata Party enacted stabilization policies which find adherents even today.

EMERGENCE OF NATIONAL CHAUVINISM ■ The appearance in 1980 of an organized theological fascist movement signaled a new trend in Indian politics. The consolidation of a Hindu majority began in the mid-1970s as a strategy adopted by Indira Gandhi alongside the undemocratic measures of 1975. However, the BJP and its petty bourgeois ensemble of pundits, professors, professionals, merchants, and money-lenders came in a militant vein and won the support of the big bourgeoisie, who found in them a vision which was new and different from the tired Congress Party (in which the bourgeois-landlord bloc once placed its total faith). The communalism (theological fascism) of the BJP and its allies won them adherents among upper castes, who blamed their declining fortunes or opportunities on the compensatory discrimination package enacted by the state for the

lower castes. The BJP became their vehicle. Further, the BJP spoke of "Hindu Pride" which worked well amongst the privileged and the petty bourgeois Hindus for whom economic renewal was being couched in terms of a renewal of national character along the lines of Hindu ethics. This crude version of Weberianism, that capitalism thrives in areas with a certain form of culture, allowed the BJP to suggest that certain people (Muslims and lower castes) deter India's development as a major world power.

STALEMATE ■ Privatization and a complete subordination of the direction of the Indian economy to imperialist forces and communalism (theological fascism) emerge as two sides of the same beast; the bourgeois-landlord interests demand the withdrawal of the state from offering two kinds of protections: "unproductive" state programs and social minorities. In different shades, the various bourgeois parties adopted these two elements in their fight to control the uncertain destiny of the nation. The Congress lost its ground to the BJP in the 'Hindi-speaking' states of North India and in the states which have benefitted the most from recent economic developments (notably, the western Indian states of Maharashtra and Gujarat). Regional parties in the South claimed some of the Congress strongholds and the Communist parties held onto three major enclaves (West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala).

In many respects, the collapse of the Congress Party enabled various concealed interests to fight it out rather than manage contradictions bureaucratically (within the closed doors of undemocratic Congress meetings). The new parties, in the 1996 elections, stretched their natural support bases to the limit. The BJP will find it hard to claim support from lower castes for an extended period (without losing its upper caste base) and from South India (without losing its Hindi-speaking character); the regional parties are bound by their localities; the Communist parties have been unable to break out of their enclaves. This stalemate, it seems, will be the way of the recent future.

The United Front, which now rules, comprises the Communist Party of India and secular-bourgeois-landlord parties which voice a strong commitment to the lower castes (Janata Dal, Samajwadi Janata Party), rich peasants (Bharitiya Kisan Kamgar Party), and the regional bourgeoisie (Telugu Desam, Tamil Maanila Congress, DMK).

The Communist Party (Marxist) and the Congress offer this government outside support to ensure the progressive marginalization of the BJP and to provide some stability to the political order.

The United Front government however, responds to the crisis in a manner identical to Congress/IMF policies. The Finance Minister of the new government, P. Chidambaram, left the Congress Party before the elections (he was the Commerce Minister for a time in the Rao government). Chidambaram is committed to the liberalization programs and is busy readjusting the economy in the image of the IMF's blueprints.

The new government often tempers its policies with an occasional sop to the people, but such populism does not address the organic crisis, it simply attempts to stabilize rule and to enforce the will of imperialism. Chidambaram recently proposed a Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) to enable the government to secure revenues from some corporations.

At the time of the elections, a number of major corruption scandals became public knowledge: details of bribery and graft by Rao, his son, his Communications Minister, various members of the Congress, leaders of the BJP and leaders of a party of disaffected indigenous groups (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha) broke in the press and the Central Bureau of Investigations made a number of important arrests. These tales of corruption, in the storm-clouds of the political sky, find their most base expression in the everyday corruption which lives in the structure of economic elements.

The United Front government, unless it engages in a radical attack on socio-economic relations and the nexus of the bourgeoisie and landlord class with the state, will simply work within an involuted structure to enforce the will of those ruling class interests. The BJP, incidentally, is in the midst of various political battles of its own. The party experiences the problems of governance, which is functionally difficult for a political organization founded on opposition to the order without an analysis of its own crises besides the question of "national character." In Gujarat, the BJP split and a rival faction now rules the region. The BJP, like other bourgeois parties, slips into the welter of crisis management and structural corruption.

TACTICAL MATTERS ■ Given the nature of the long-term economic crisis and the short-term political crisis, Indian Communism is forced to choose

its tactics carefully. The Communist movement, consolidated in the Left Front, combats the elements of liberalization and communalism through political actions by organized peasant protests, by industrial strikes and by offering clear leadership to the elements who coalesce to fight for a secular society. The secular bourgeois parties (the constituents of the current united front) offer support in anti-communal struggles, but they are in utter disarray on the issue of liberalization (since many find the repertoire of the IMF compelling).

The Left Front, led by the Center of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), is the most consistent combatant against the liberalization policies tutored by the proponents of "market forces." In this struggle there are few allies, and the CPM is at the forefront of ensuring that the fight to marginalize the BJP does not obscure the fundamental fight against the

formative policies of the IMF. In late September 1996, the Central Committee of the CPM put the United Front government on notice for following the IMF World Bank framework and working "against the people's interests."

Under cover of the preservation of secular values, the bourgeoisie might slip in policies to destroy the economic destiny of the masses. The left in India is allowed to operate with relative freedom. This opening allows the Communist parties the means to construct a consensus in favor of democratic values. The present situation is fraught with challenges, and India today will move in unknown directions. Despite the fury of events, the left as a whole works within differently chosen domains to forbid the right from making its passage as well as to construct a just future. □

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loose racist, chauvinist and anti-Semitic forces that must still be corralled.

We have to convince and help the trade union movement become a more effective, powerful instrument in the struggle against racism, especially in the shops.

We must raise the level of educational work within the Party as part of the struggle against racism, bigotry, discrimination and all forms of prejudice.

PARTY FINANCES ■ The fifth main challenge is changing our attitude toward Party finances. Most wrong attitudes about finances are fed by a main misconception that there are really no limits to our funds. Therefore, at times we make political decisions without any consideration about whether we can afford to carry them out. Making politically correct decisions does not mean our decisions are financially correct.

I have raised many other questions around finances and we should discuss them. But out of

the discussion must come, I believe, concrete plans for a new advance gift and wills campaign and a whole new set of attitudes toward our overall finances.

I think we should recognize that because of the work of comrades like, first of all, Esther Moroze, but also Alice Seligson and recently Lee Dlugin, we are now in a position to set the stage for a successful campaign and to show potential contributors and investors that we have proven our ability to invest and secure their money in accord with their wishes and needs and at the same time to benefit the Party and the paper.

We should also come out of this meeting with plans for a recruiting, consolidation and activation drive - with an emphasis on recruiting workers. This, in turn, requires a new plan for renewed industrial concentration. We have some weaknesses. But our overall outlook should be very positive.

Based on our great achievements, I am confident that we can face and meet all the challenges - confident that we can and will make all the adjustments and changes necessary to accomplish everything we set out to do in the coming post-election period. □

Darwin & Marx Scientific Twins

Phil Stein

Darwin did not know what a bitter satire he wrote on mankind, and especially on his countrymen, when he showed that free competition, the struggle for existence, which the economists celebrate as the highest historical achievement, is the normal state of the animal kingdom.

– Frederick Engels

Scientific thinking – dialectical thinking – can be defined as, the necessary method of science to investigate and discover the truths of nature through critical analysis of concepts and hypothesis.

For the Greeks, *dialektos* meant discourse or discussion. From *dialektos*, dialect and dialectic, we have the art or practice of examining opinion or ideas logically so as to determine their validity. It is in our interest as materialists to understand the combining terms, dialectical materialism. Materialism holds that matter is the only reality and that everything in the world including thought, will and feeling can be explained in terms of matter. Marx and Engels were the first to subject materialism to dialectics. They followed the logical dialectic method of the philosopher Hegel and developed dialectical materialism. For them dialectics became the method for the analysis of materialism.

Dialectical materialism stands in opposition to idealism which holds that the objects we perceive (matter) are actually – or only – ideas of the perceiving mind and that it is impossible to know whether reality exists apart from the mind. A concept being revived today under the shibboleth of post-modernism proclaims there is no such thing as objective reality. However, the idealism of which we speak gives preeminence to the mind above matter. This would mean that the mind was here before the universe or matter was formed, for how else – according to the ideology of idealism – could reality be known? The question then arises, was this first perceiving mind God?

But dialectical thinking became the method of modern science and through dialectical material-

ism science was able to bring an ever-greater understanding of the coming into being of the universe, as well as the true nature of our own being. By remaining on the path of dialectical thinking we can understand and hasten our reaching the goal of a socialist and then Communist society.

From the earliest historical period of developing societies, great thinkers, rare materialist thinkers – writers and poets such as Heraclitus (500 BC) and Democritus (420 AD) dared to defy the mystical superstitions and religious beliefs of their societies. Marx wrote about both in his doctoral thesis. These thinkers sought out the truth of nature by explaining the birth and formation of the universe from their own logical and dialectical understanding of the historical period in which they lived.

And science today continues to fulfill its mission and obligation of uncovering the mysteries of the universe and its formation, as well as revealing the true nature of the structure of matter. This powerful driving force of natural human activity, sweeps aside the flotsam and jetsam of naive, foolish, specious and monstrously incoherent thinking that has for millenniums confused and blocked humanity's road to finding a peaceful life that would be in harmony with nature. Through understanding dialectical and historical materialism, humanity, the great majority of whom are working people, would be better equipped and able to fulfill their role.

Modern science today is the bulwark supporting Marxist theory. It does not do this overtly but since it is the nature of science to uncover the truth of the makeup of nature and all the matter that comprises it, including the human brain (which of course is matter that thinks) it cannot but, (in its researches and methodology) support the scientific reasoning of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Marx and Engels having discovered dialectical materialism and historical materialism are supported by the objective logic of modern science.

Here too we must add Darwin whose *Origin of Species*, was one of the 19th. century's two greatest

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scientific discoveries, Marx's *Capital* being the other.¹ Darwin's book elicited from Marx the statement: "Not only is a death blow dealt here for the first time to 'Teleology' in the natural sciences but their rational meaning is empirically explained." So wrote Marx to the idealist revolutionary Lassalle in 1861.²

Earlier in December, 1860 Marx wrote to Engels:

During my time of trial these last four weeks (Marx was nursing his wife through a serious illness) I have read all sort of things. Among others, Darwin's book on natural selection. Although it is developed in the crude English style, this is the book which contains the basis in natural history for our view.³

Marx said of Darwin's *Origin of Species* which appeared in 1859, the same year as his own *Critique of Political Economy*, "Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history."⁴

John Lewis writes: "Marx was immensely excited by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. He and his circle of intimate friends discussed its significance for months. Marx sent Darwin a copy of *Capital* on its publication."⁵

Engels too, took notice and wrote:

The proof which Darwin first developed in connected form, that the stock of organic products of nature surrounding us today, including mankind is the result of a long period of evolution of a few unicellular germs, and that these again have arisen from protoplasm or albumen which came into existence by chemical means.⁶

For Engels: "Nature is the test of dialectics... nature's process is dialectical and not metaphysical; that does not move in the eternal oneness of a perpetually repeated cycle but goes through a real historical evolution." And that:

before all others, mention should be made of Darwin who dealt the metaphysical conception of nature the heaviest blow by his proof that the whole of organic nature today, plants, animals and therefore also man, is the product of a process of evolution which has gone through million of years. But the scientists who have learned to think scientifically are still few and far between.⁷

Engels also pointed out that:

Darwin did not know what a bitter satire he wrote on mankind, and especially on his countrymen, when he showed that free competition, the struggle for existence, which the economists celebrate as the highest historical achievement, is the normal state of the animal kingdom. Only conscious organization of social production, in which production and distribution are carried on in a planned way can lift mankind above the rest of the animal world.⁸

Lenin too, saw the significance of Darwin when he wrote:

Just as Darwin put an end to the view that the species of animals and plants are unconnected among themselves, fortuitous, "created by God" and immutable, and was the first to put biology on an absolutely scientific basis by establishing the mutability and succession of species, so Marx put an end to the view that society is a mechanical aggregation of individuals which will tolerate any kind of moderation at the will of the powers that be.⁹

Stalin too had read Darwin while training for the priesthood at the Tiflis Theological Seminary and as a result began preaching atheism to his fellow theological students.¹⁰

EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED ■ Thus Darwin's restless probing mind led him to conclusions similar to Marx's. Marx adapted dialectics to his materialist philosophy which affirms that by its nature the world is material, that it exists independent of human consciousness, that it is understandable, that matter is primary and thought – consciousness – is secondary. Marx's dialectical materialist philosophy is based on the concept of the contradiction of opposites (thesis and antithesis) and their continual resolution (synthesis). This is dialectical materialism as explained in the Soviet *Concise Political Dictionary*: "Dialectical materialism is the doctrine about the universal concatenation and about the most general laws of the development of nature, society and thought."

Thus nothing happens of its own accord, in isolation, everything is linked – tied together in cause and effect. Dialectics is diametrically opposed to metaphysics. Logical thought as

opposed to mystical speculations. Of concatenation, it is well to understand that it means a series of links that are united as in a chain. A successive series or order of things or events, casually or dependently related; as a concatenation of causes. From the principle of universal concatenation comes the methodological conclusion; that to know an object all of its aspects and connections have to be studied. The Soviet dictionary states:

Dialectical materialism is a revolutionary doctrine. The dialectical materialist focus on analysis of the phenomena of nature, of social life and consciousness, permits the discovery of the laws and the propelling forces of their development that permits a scientific evaluation of the future and contributes to human progress.

In a very recent writing, the Nobel Prize physicist Steven Weinberg, speaking about "all the principles of science," stated, "They do not wander aimlessly, rather they are all connected."

Thus dialectical materialism is the scientific, philosophical conception of the world through the logical understanding of the nature of matter. It is an integral part of Marxist and Leninist doctrine.

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM ■ Before historical materialism was developed by Marx and Engels, diverse idealist conceptions about society dominated but could not explain the real sources and causes of social phenomena and processes. It was not until the development of historical materialism that it was made clear that the base of social life and the laws that determine its development are the mode of production of material goods: the forces of production and the relations of production to which correspond a determined political structure. It is the substitution of one mode of production for another (that is in our epoch the substitution of the capitalist mode of production by the socialist mode of production) that leads from one socioeconomic formation to another.

"The essence of the historical process," historical materialism is determined," as the Soviet dictionary states,

by the law of the corresponding of production relations to the productive forces that was discovered by Marx. At a certain stage of the production relations (under capitalism the relations between workers and capitalists), the productive forces (the combined means of pro-

duction and the workers who put them in motion) enter into contradiction. In this case a social revolution is produced - constituting the logical transition from one socioeconomic form to another.

Before arriving at the dialectical materialist understanding of the universe and the human presence in it, it is well to note that this understanding does not come easily. Ideologically and scientifically people can acquire the basic knowledge (dialectical thought) to understand the structure of their society and thus be encouraged to change it. Yet people do not move more rapidly toward change because they are not fully aware of the function of the underlying socioeconomic structure. And it can be said that ideological concepts do not explain all social consciousness but only a part of it. The rest consists of the effects of the ideas and emotions that stem from personal, family and everyday life which are often rooted more deeply than the economic structure.

This is not to dampen our desires and efforts to hasten change but rather to enable us to become better fighters through understanding the various pitfalls. Or do we today have an all-pervasive attitude as expressed by Marxist art historian Arnold Hauser in his analysis of political realism during the period of the Italian Renaissance when he wrote:

What was the whole of capitalist society but an illustration of Machiavelli's doctrine? Was it not plain enough that reality followed its own inexorable logic, in face of which all ideas are helpless, and that the choice was between adapting oneself to reality or going under?¹¹

Of course there have always been tremendous obstacles to humanity's forward march. But throughout history, thinking humans have provided humankind with scientific knowledge. In modern times this culminated with the discoveries of Marx and Engels of dialectical and historical materialism that was further developed by Lenin. The three, finding support in Darwin's discovery of the origin of life on the planet, provided the necessary ideological weapons for struggle.

EARLY HUMAN THOUGHT ■ From the beginning of the human conscious experience on earth, the ignorant mind, overwhelmed by the environment

of the planet and the surrounding universe, could only find explanations of it all in supernatural concoctions. The sun, the moon, the stars were believed to be the gods that would protect them from the terrors in the world. Philosophy, with its supernatural basis has its roots in this early ignorance. Religions developed through Plato's idealism into the Judaic and Christian religions and in dialectical terms, "The gods did not create the world but were themselves created by the same primeval forces that had created it" – meaning matter in its form as the mind.

But all the gibberish about gods and religions was not totally accepted during the early civilizations. Voices of reason were found. For example Leucippus (430 BC) states: "Nothing happens at random: everything happens out of reason and by necessity." Outside of the idealist philosophies of Plato, Socrates and Aristotle a Greek materialist school existed. Heraclitus (500 BC) wrote, "Although opposites are unified by their interdependence, they exist in a state of constant strife."¹² And: "That which is in opposition is in concert, and from things that differ comes the most beautiful harmony." Anaximander (600 BC) advanced the idea: "The universe arose out of an infinite 'Boundless' – a mass of undifferentiated material. The world was generated when the hot and the cold were separated from the Boundless by its eternal motion."¹³

For Anaxagoras (460 BC): "The universe is infinite and is composed of infinitely divisible matter. Mind is matter considered as conscious and knowing"¹⁴

For Democritus (420 BC) there was no God or creation: "Since nothing can come from nothing, and change really occurs, and motion requires a void, reality must consist of atoms moving in a void."¹⁵ Lucretius (90 BC) too, wrote of the nature of things:

Nothing can ever be created by divine power out of nothing. Nothing is ever generated from nothing; nature consists of atoms moving in a void. Everything in nature is different from every other thing; the number of atoms of each shape is infinite, although the shapes of atoms are not infinite in number. The soul is composed of atoms; hence at death the soul dies with the body.¹⁶

Still from Lucretius:

But if I knew nothing of atoms, of what they were, still from the very ways of the heavens, from many other things I could name, I'd dare to assert and prove that not for us and not by gods was this world made. There's too much wrong with it.¹⁷

Both Plato and Aristotle believed that beyond matter there was an eternal changeless force. Theirs was an idealist concept that denied materialism. Plato had his mystical "One" and Aristotle his "Prime Mover." Both were a supernatural force that caused everything. Thomas Aquinas' "famed proof of God" (1250) was a repetition derived from Plato and Aristotle. It was only with the arrival of Marx, Engels and Darwin that the fog lifts and modern materialism is revealed. For them evolutionary development arose from "conflictive interactions" in the universe and in living matter.

MARXISM AND SCIENCE ■ Before Marx and Engels, the age of science broke out when Francis Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Newton, Voltaire, Paine and John Locke helped to build a new foundation for materialism. When the influential Bishop John Berkeley exerted a great negative influence on science, David Hume became his most devastating critic. "If we assume," he wrote, "that a spiritual being created matter, we could also assume a creator for the spiritual being, and so on in a ridiculous 'infinite regress – a God who created a God who created a God."¹⁸

In the middle of the 18th century the two great materialists Denis Diderot and Paul Henri Holback took their stand. Holback claimed: "Religion is the art of intoxicating people with religious fervor to prevent them from being cognizant of their troubles heaped on them by those who govern."¹⁹ Diderot argued that the mind had arisen not simply from atoms but from biological matter, a result of "heat and motion." Shelley too, confirmed the dialectical materialist explanation of matter: "Matter such as we hold it is not inert. It is infinitely active and subtle. Light, electricity and magnetism are fluids not surpassed by thought itself in tenuity and activity; like thought they are sometimes the cause and sometimes the effect of motion."²⁰

Parallel to the credos of the philosophers were the socioeconomic foundations of each period exerting influence through society's inherent contradictions. Capitalist economic forces and bour-

geois politics stirred up abstract difficult thought in the philosophical writing of Kant and Hegel. Kant, though interested in science, could not prove the existence of God and argued that "belief in God was justified by 'faith'." For Marx, "Hegel's philosophical method was sheer mysticism and argued his idealist dialectics must be repudiated." For Marx, Engels and Lenin the universe consisted only of matter in space. It was never "created." There was no Prime Mover and no God; "the universe arose from the chance formation of atoms." Materialism was now based more firmly on science. It is dialectical because nature is dialectical.

Life emerged from matter and – including 'Man' and his 'mind' evolved by natural selection (survival of the fittest); there is no 'soul,' thought is a function of the brain; the mind based on the brain dies with the body; religion propagates delusion; there is no immortality, no heaven or hell; morality is a social phenomenon and does not depend on religious belief.²¹

During the time of Marx and Engels certain scientific facts had basic validity, and Engels made use of the new science, which gave him a broader philosophical grasp of the scientific discoveries than would have the non-Marxist scientist, and as Engels himself stated, "enabling us to see deep into the nature of nature." Darwin exerted great influence on the dialectical materialists. Wrote Marx: "Darwin's theory is very important and serves me as a basis in the natural science for the class struggle in history."²² For Marx, Darwin's *The Origin of Species* dealt a death blow to theology. Though lacking the scientific advances of the genetic processes, Engels, due to his materialist outlook, was able to explain the transition from ape to human. Marx and Engels delved into the human as a "natural being," possessing the "powers of life" with instincts. Instincts which could either be developed or weakened by social theories. They agreed with Darwin that human life evolved from animal life. As materialists with the the science of the 19th century, Engels was able to write: "With regard to the origin of life, therefore, up to the present, science is only able to say with certainty that it must have arisen as a result of chemical action."²³

MATERIALISM AND REVOLUTION ■ Though materialist thought emerged with the capitalist struggle against feudalism, it also tended to cease with the

rise of the capitalist ruling class. It was Marx and Engels who carried on the role of further developing materialism. But Marx, Cameron wrote, "did not believe that mastery of dialectical thinking would provide a magical path to truth. Practice ... is at the root of his 'method'. It is a revolutionary philosophy – 'change' the world – that gives life to dialectical thinking."²⁴ To change the world, revolutionary activists were needed. But as Engels points out, the "exploitative-class society" is the cause of a 'static' manner of thinking which fixes a mind-set without contradictions rather than interpenetrative conflict as the essence of reality."

Marxism arose from the experiences and observations of Marx and Engels in a special revolutionary epoch and is a materialist analysis of the relations of humanity and nature. Lenin carried Marxism to a new level. He examined historical phenomena; monopoly capitalism, the proletarian revolution and socialism. The opportunity that befell Lenin had not befallen Marx and Engels. Lenin could study the situation facing industrial workers and concentrate on advancing the mass struggle against feudal and capitalist exploitation. In science too, Lenin was able to go beyond Engels in developing the materialist concept of matter. When he wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in 1908, science had already laid the basis for elementary particle physics, enabling him to closely follow science for whatever new aspects of matter it revealed. Lenin was bent on grasping the true nature of matter and in his philosophical notebooks he emphasized the importance of the conflictive forces of nature and society raising dialectical-materialist epistemology to a new level.

Lenin brought out what was only implied by Marx and Engels – namely that "thought is not material but a product of matter." He demonstrated the difference between formal logic with its fragmented approach and dialectical logic with its all-encompassing interacting spirals.

Today scientists are laying bare the true nature of the universe. Though clearly they do so without acknowledging their dialectical materialist logic in reasoning and solving natural mysteries. The history of materialism has always been enmeshed and hidden in ruling class philosophy and history. The logic of dialectical materialism is clearing away the mess of metaphysical cant that 20th century scientists of the capitalist system have been wont to drape over their discoveries, avoiding the

ultimate conclusion that there exists no rhyme or reason for the universe.

If we understand that the universe is made up of matter in motion and that in nature there is blind interaction of opposite entities – that this clash of opposites is the key to the destruction of the old and the emergence of the new and “everything arises from this and nothing else,” we will understand the pointlessness of the universe. “What we call development in nature is mostly a tendency to complexity arising from conflictive units.” It is this tendency that continues on our planet through atoms, to molecules, to living matter, plants and animals. Nature and society, in response to the clash of opposite entities act in the same general way, namely by qualitative change arising from quantitative.

The Newtonian vision of a universe of divine serenity lasted until the 1920s. By the '30s, it became apparent that the universe was a swirl of endlessly conflicting forces. Its violence became more apparent with supernova star explosions and the cataclysmic collision of galaxies. Theoreticians of the Big Bang hold that it took three minutes for the universe to form. They cannot discover any act of “creation” and have calculated that in the first split second a sea of hot agitated photons – particles of light – exploded. Speculations about the “beginning before the beginning” are associated with the metaphysical Stephen Hawking. With today’s knowledge it is not possible to “push the evolution of the universe back beyond the ‘sea of hot photons’ which coalesced to form the particles that later combined into atoms.” Physicist Steven Weinberg, the author of the 1977 book about the formation of the universe, *The First Three Minutes* has stated; “The more the universe seems comprehensible the more it seems pointless.” About Weinberg, Cameron observed, “the universe is overwhelmingly hostile. We can see a universe as ‘pointless’ only if we are looking for a ‘point’, that is, looking for something that it is not in the nature of matter to possess; in short if we are looking for God or more elegantly, for Purpose. But the universe gives no indication of God or Purpose in its mindless mechanistic repetitions. So all is not a total loss, he concludes, though “the workings of matter will destroy earth and us sooner or later, they also give us life.”²⁵

It has been shown that our general emotional

and behavioral patterns come from our animal ancestors, especially the primates. This should bring us to consider our potentials and limitations and “why we have both.” But our animal roots have negated the idea that the mind is a unique creation shaped by God. Darwin makes it clear that the human has developed by evolution in all aspects of their being. And as Marx states: “The mode of production of the material means of life determines, in general, the social, political and intellectual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of human beings that determine their existence, but conversely, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness.”

In considering the rampant destructive nature of capitalism – out-of-control, hell-bent on the road to the extinction of all life on earth – “the point is to change it.” Earth and life on it can only be saved by a mass oriented and socialist planned economy. □

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