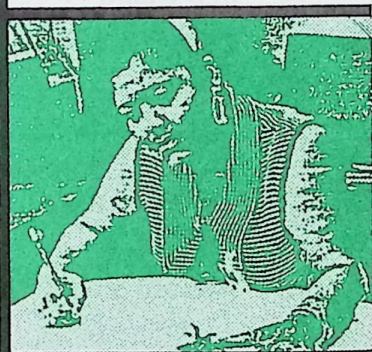


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International Women's History Month

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The Clinton Administration and New Tasks for Struggle

Jarvis Tyner

This is a time of great change in our country and we face a very special challenge. The situation we are confronting is really quite urgent, and the people need to be mobilized to respond to the challenge before us.

How can the maximum possible gains for the people be achieved under the present circumstances? An approach is urgently needed that will lead to victories and not frustrations, advances instead of defeats. President Clinton's State of the Union address laid out plans for reviving the nation's economy – it is necessary to understand these plans and gauge the response of the people. How do we proceed?

The speech really had a big impact on the political scene – it was more than the routine State of the Union speech. It was given by an administration that, while still supporting capitalism, has some different policies than previous right-wing administrations.

Normally after an election in which the ruling party is replaced there is an expectation of change. However, now after 12 years of rightwing economic disaster, the expectation is tenfold.

Clinton won the election because he stood for change and sounded different from Bush. He condemned "trickle down" economics; he was for inclusion of minorities and women; he attacked Reaganomics and called for job creation and money for education. Clinton stood for taxing the rich and easing the burden on the middle class and for a health care system that would cover everyone. As a candidate he supported civil rights, was pro-choice and for an end to discrimination against gays. He also called for more spending to cure AIDS.

Clinton argued the best way to close the deficit was to create well paying jobs for the unemployed. And even though some of his campaign themes moved in a conservative direction and he distanced himself from Jesse Jackson, the African American community and labor, he was still to the left of George Bush.

Jarvis Tyner is a member of the National Board CPUSA and Chair of its Electoral and Political Action Commission. From a speech at Unity Center, New York City, February 28, 1993.

The fact that he was elected despite massive red-baiting for his stand on the war in Vietnam and trip to Moscow showed a great political maturity among voters. The overwhelming rejection of the Republicans following the stench of fascism that came out of their convention was a strong indication of where the people are at. Most voters understood Clinton's concept of a "New Covenant" not as a continuation of Bush's program but rather as meaning new policies with a pro-people orientation. This electorate wanted a full rejection of the Bush ultra-right program. Counting the Perot protest vote, 62 percent of those who cast ballots in the November election did so against Bush. This vote was a great defeat for the right wing. Clinton won because he stood for democratic change – now he must deliver.

In this regard, the speech was the first presentation of the President's comprehensive plan to get the country's economy moving again. Without knowing all the details, we can say based on the information now available that this plan in its present form is not going to meet the country's ills. It is not going to move the economy out of crisis and in the proper direction.

The plan to create jobs is welcomed but the number of jobs is grossly inadequate; the taxes on the rich are a step in the right direction but the amounts levied don't go far enough and the taxes on the working class go too far; the proposals to reestablish Head Start and give free vaccinations to children are good, however the increased taxes on Social Security benefits are bad; the cuts in the military budget are correct but the automatic removal of people from welfare rolls after two years will be catastrophic – the same goes for the cuts in Medicaid funding.

Basically the President's economic program has its class priorities: it asks the working class to sacrifice a hell of a lot more than the wealthy corporations. It is aimed first and foremost at protecting the profits of the rich, and reviving U.S. industry at the least cost to the capitalist ruling class. That is its top priority.

It needs to be said the working people and the racially oppressed have suffered enough – the rich

should pay for their sins. Commenting on Clinton's economic program, Communist Party chair Gus Hall recently wrote: "To resolve the crisis will take a militant, uncompromising anti-capitalist approach." The Democratic economic plan clearly doesn't come close to this. In fact, it is a plan intended to save capitalism.

ECONOMIC EMERGENCY ■ The country is living in a state of economic emergency. Cities are in crisis and the infrastructure is collapsing. Over ten million are unemployed and another nine million are underemployed and do not make enough to meet basic needs. Thirty-seven million have no health care. Four million are homeless and many more millions live in poverty and go to bed hungry at night, especially children. Indeed, the U.S. government's failure to provide for adequate pre-natal care makes it the biggest abuser of children and contributor to infant mortality.

The fact is that millions of youth have to face a life of crisis. Indeed, the crisis in education and health care, combined with the drug epidemic, lack of jobs, the cruelty of the criminal justice system, and the possibility of dying in wars of aggression all add up to life without a future.

Clinton's plan underestimates the depth of the systemic crisis. The problem is structural and is characterized by permanently closed down industries and entire regions of the country, partly caused by the massive introduction of new technology. Now in order to stay profitable big corporations are "downsizing." Millions who had good paying long-term jobs now have only the prospect of lower paying jobs and long-term unemployment. The system as a whole is in crisis. The people should tell the new president, "It's the capitalist system, stupid!"

The poor, the unemployed, the homeless and hungry are not the source of the problem. The economy is in crisis not because working people have been getting a free ride, as the right has been arguing. On the contrary, it is the capitalists who have increased profits at the expense of the standard of living and buying power of the working class.

A real solution to this crisis cannot exist without reversing the pro-rich policies of the Bush Administration and bringing jobs and/or income to the working class. Workers are the vast majority of consumers. Clinton was right to say that a jobless recovery is no recovery at all. Corporate profits have been up 67 percent this year according to the *Wall Street Journal* – but high profits have not ended the crisis.

The well being of the working people is the bottom line. Unless jobs are produced that put money in the pockets and bank accounts of working people affording them the possibility to buy homes, cars, appliances and pay rent, the economy will never be able to sustain growth. Bush's "recovery" is therefore no recovery at all.

Clinton contends the "private sector is the main engine for economic growth," the main source of jobs, etc. Well, that's true under capitalism. However, the private sector has failed and capitalism is in decline – it is broken and basically cannot be fixed. If the private sector has failed, then the government must step in and provide jobs. There is a basic fight here. If the system "can't afford" to provide for the people, it's not time for more sacrifice by the people – it's time to change the system.

CORPORATE ATTACK ■ Concessions to the working class in Clinton's plan, no matter how minor, are under fierce attack from right-wing Republicans. This is occurring because most of the corporate power structure considers the people-serving aspects of the plan and the proposals to tax the rich to be abominations. Such a fierce attack is occurring because the ruling class does not want even shared sacrifice, rather they are demanding the working class take the entire weight.

This frenzied corporate counterattack is because increasing taxes of the rich implies their responsibility – and those responsible must pay for the crisis. This truth frightens monopoly. Thus all the ruling class wants to talk about is the deficit and cutting social programs. There is no end to their talk about productivity and blaming the working class. However, as far as they are concerned, all discussion of profits is off limits.

They want to eliminate all entitlements, but don't want to cut the military budget. Monopoly wants the U.S. to be the top cop in the world – the only "military super power" as Clinton put it. Despite all talk about the end of the Cold War, the ruling class still sees military aggression in the future. They still want to crush socialism. Hence their support for the Torricelli Bill and desire to increase U.S. involvement in crises around the world. War and aggression is promoted because it brings more power and profits.

But the Republicans, with help from the Democrats, are responsible for the crisis. They have no shame. Phil Gramm, the millionaire Senator from Texas, has the audacity to say that the tax plan

"punishes those who work hard and rewards those who don't." Strange words from a man who aptly fits the title of "Mr. Oil Depletion Allowance."

It is the working people who are the real hard workers and who have the greatest burden in taxes. It is the fruits of their labor that keeps this country going. This system doesn't reward hard work - if it did most working people would be very rich. Capitalism's priority is to reward capitalist ownership, not hard work. Gramm's position is an insult to every working person.

New York's Senator Alphonse D'Amato is yet another prime example of the shameless bankruptcy of ruling class politicians. Here is someone who never met a kick-back or a bribe he didn't like and has been feeding at the public trough all of his career. D'Amato is in the back pocket of big business or any one else who pays - that's why he is in the forefront of advocating cuts in social programs. This is the U.S. Senator who said the mere presence of Black youth frightens him. He and other rightwing Republicans along with their Democratic allies voted for the policies that got the country in a mess in the first place.

The question is: when did they or will they now support any sacrifice by the rich? The Republican right is totally out of touch with reality. The party of Lincoln has become the party of open racism, male supremacy and anti-labor capitalist greed. Rightwing Republicans are to the U.S. political scene what the suicide Doctor Kavorkian - "Dr. Death" - is to the American medical profession. It is a welcome development that they are split and losing membership. Good riddance! Now we need a people's party to move the political spectrum to the left.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY ■ Nowhere is the crisis more profound than in the African American community. The Clinton speech was made during African American History month and despite appointing some Blacks to his administration, paying tribute to Martin Luther King, inviting Aretha Franklin to sing at the Lincoln Memorial and crying in a Black Church in Washington D.C., his plan does not address the crisis faced by the African American people.

President Clinton's address hardly mentioned civil rights. The word "racism" wasn't used nor was "labor." And the words "homeless" and "hungry" were also absent. There was some reference to the inner cities, however only when he wanted to discuss "law and order."

President Clinton needs to break loose from a number of backward concepts. Among them is the stupidity of characterizing people's movements as "special interests." He had better grow to understand something that the Republicans will never comprehend: all of the history of our country points to the fact that the struggle for equality of the African American people is not just some special interest, but is in the *national interest* of the United States to resolve this question.

The U. S. state-monopoly capitalist system rests on class inequality and class exploitation, but racism is deeply imbedded in its very fabric. Racism splits the working class and holds it back. Working people of color face a harsher exploitation and oppression as a result of racism which is a source of super-profits. Racial equality is no narrow question. It is a special question of national strategic significance. In our history it has been critical. The civil rights movement is critical to advancing democracy for all - its impact is felt worldwide.

Thus every major advance for the working class and people of our country has had to deal with the fight against racism and for equality and the all-important issue of unity.

In picking his cabinet, Clinton showed total insensitivity to victimized undocumented workers. And he should have called for the repeal of the Simpson-Mazzoli act, under which the government creates conditions that criminalize millions of working people, leaving them open to the worst exploitation.

His treatment of Haitians is equally backward, and is a betrayal of his campaign promises. At the base of the Statue of Liberty are the words of Emma Lazarus: "Give me your tired, your poor...." This statement reflects the sentiments of our people. It doesn't say, Give me your rich, greedy and idle. It talks about the "huddled masses yearning to be free," not entrepreneurs yearning to exploit. Haitians should be let in and the dictatorship in Haiti isolated until President Aristide is reinstated.

A PEOPLE'S PLAN ■ President Clinton should be told loudly and clearly that what is needed most is not "law and order" but an emergency plan to attack the crisis of the cities. The African American people don't need enterprise zones, but *opportunity zones* where the priority is good paying union jobs for the residents, not tax breaks for business. An emergency program is needed to rebuild housing - to begin with hundreds of thousands of units nationally. A national public works program is needed to rebuild

schools and health care facilities. You can't sweep the drugs out without sweeping jobs in – especially for youth.

Thus if America is to progress it must address the crisis of the ghettos, barrios and reservations of our country. Nothing less will do. Clinton should remember that without the African American and labor vote he could not have won the election.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ■ Affirmative action is needed to meet this problem – the challenge presented by racism really cannot be met otherwise because applying equal resources in an unequal situation can only result in greater inequality. For example, the crisis in Harlem needs more resources than the problems in Bensonhurst. Contrary to the opinion of the critics, affirmative action does not grow out of a lack of qualification nor a desire to gain advantage over others, but emerges from the need to overcome gross disadvantages imposed on non-whites and women by the racist, male supremacist, capitalist system. Indeed, affirmative action is so important it must be part of any new covenant.

Clinton must go further in addressing the jobs question and the crisis of the cities and develop a stronger program responding to the critical plight of the working people first and foremost.

The Communist Party USA has come up with a comprehensive program to meet the crisis that calls for an \$800 billion massive federal program to rebuild America and meet human needs that will create 16 million jobs. This includes rebuilding the infrastructure, providing decent housing for all – especially the homeless – education, health care and childcare facilities. It also provides for cleaning up the environment and more culture and recreation. This program can be paid for by really cutting the military budget and taxing the rich and corporations.

We also call for a shorter workweek and doubling the minimum wage. This will create millions of new jobs and increase the buying power of the multi-racial working class. In the meantime there should be unemployment compensation from paycheck to paycheck and compensation for youth who are first time job seekers. The Young Communist League is already petitioning for youth jobs and is receiving an excellent response.

In relation to the much talked about deficit, our program provides \$200 billion to immediately cut it. However, the Communist Party has a much more basic proposal to eliminate the deficit – cancel it. We propose cancellation because the banks have

already been paid back and are basically living off the \$300 billion a year and rising interest payments. This really amounts to welfare from taxpayers to the banks. The time has come to end this welfare to the rich and set our economy on a balanced budget footing. Small holders of the bonds should be paid in full – the wealthy bond holders have gotten enough already.

The Communist Party program calls for cutting the military budget and no U.S. military or quasi-military intervention. Somalia underscores the importance of this proposal. The consequence of the intervention was predictable: we are now seeing soldiers shoot the people they are supposed to feed. U.S. intervention in Iraq was undisguised aggression and genocide.

With Clinton's de facto acceptance of Reagan's new foreign concept of "aggressive humanitarianism," the danger of further intervention in Yugoslavia or other parts of the world abounds. The bombing of the World Trade Center raises the danger of a Gulf of Tonkin-like provocation in order to rationalize aggression. And indeed, provocations take many forms. The Torricelli Bill is a legislative provocation – it must be immediately repealed. The time has come to repeal the law that prevents the transfer of money from the military budget to human needs. And the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) must be rejected.

The Communist Party puts forward this program to help working people find their way to struggle. And struggle is the only way it will be realized. That's what we are all about. What is needed is a new upsurge of the victims of the crisis demanding real solution.

A NEW MOMENT ■ This is a new moment. The election increased people's confidence – to have defeated Bush and set the country in a new direction is no small thing and has increased hope.

With all of its weaknesses, polls show that the people support Clinton's plan. Change is expected and at this point people think Clinton is trying.

From our point of view it is important to grasp that the President's proposals have opened some doors to struggle. The inadequacies in Clinton's plan are not a reason for panic or for adopting a "plague on both your houses" approach. A different mood exists now than before the election. If this mood is turned into street heat the Clinton Administration will have to respond.

An important difference exists between the

Clinton Administration and its predecessor. The working class and peoples forces are in a different position to bring pressure to bear on the government. And experience has already demonstrated that Clinton can be moved. Gus Hall, in a recent speech quoted a shipyard worker in Southern California who said, "Clinton has given us the feeling that we can do something about our problems."

Among the 80 percent who support Clinton's plan are most of the people that must be mobilized to win a real recovery plan. The illusions that exist can only be overcome if there is a struggle going on for a more advanced pro-working class plan. The time has come for action and unity. Black Brown, white working-class unity is key on all levels, especially at the grassroots.

ORGANIZE THE HUNGRY & HOMELESS ■ We must help the struggle around economic hardships move to a higher political level. We salute the courageous efforts of the homeless fighting to preserve life and limb on the mean streets of this country, facing impossible circumstances.

To survive is a remarkable achievement, but many are not surviving. Homelessness kills!! Homeless men and women who have become activists are real heroes in the struggle for human progress and should be saluted. And those who are servicing the poor and homeless, especially in the religious community, are making a great contribution to humanity. To be humane and care for one's fellow human beings is a noble trait.

The Communist Party is ready to unite with all honest forces who are for ending the criminal housing policy of the government and corporations. We must work to reverse the bull-dozing policy of the Dinkins Administration. If the Mayor wants to be reelected he must act in a more humane way towards the homeless.

In order to win real victories in this struggle, the fight against homelessness must be taken to a higher political level. A national emergency housing bill could be introduced during this or the next session of Congress – a bill which calls for the government to end homelessness by guaranteeing a home at affordable rents for all who need one. Such legislation could be the basis for a national movement demanding its passage. A massive march on Washington along with many local marches could be organized. The 1930s are full of examples of successful struggles organized on this basis – the Lundeen Bill is an example.

While we fight for national legislation with the more liberal 103rd Congress, an eye must be kept on local fronts of struggle. This year there are many city elections. The right wing is trying to move in on the local front and recoup some of their losses from 1992. Vigilance and struggle is required. Giuliani should not be allowed to win in New York City. And next year Pat Monyihan should be replaced by someone more progressive. Labor candidates, Black, white and Brown candidates, homeless and unemployed persons must be encouraged to run for office on advanced programs.

It must be recognized that illusions do exist regarding Clinton. The best way to overcome them is to put forward a real program and learn through struggle. This is no time for a honeymoon. While the people elected Clinton, they didn't marry him. The miners' strike shows the continuing rise in militancy among workers. Indeed, the jury's ruling in Florida against General Motors and the judge's ruling in Yipsalanti, Michigan against plant closings show there is a new anti-corporate mood in the country.

A CHANGE IN MOOD ■ There is a big change in the mood of the people. Their expectations, if properly mobilized and organized, could lead to bigger changes for the better. The end of the Reagan/Bush era is objectively more than a change in personnel or political parties.

While we do not accept much of what Clinton has proposed, it is clear that the positive elements within the program have hit a responsive cord among the people: tax the rich, a health care program, Head Start, children's vaccines and some job creation. The 80 percent of the people who at this point support Clinton's program cannot be ignored. This is a reality that must be worked with. It should be recalled that people have gotten almost nothing from Washington for 12 years and President Clinton looks good in contrast to Bush and Reagan. It was like being in a political wasteland for 12 years. After this rightwing desert, any kind of oasis looks good.

And that hope can be built upon and transformed into a material force capable of compelling the administration to change course. One harkens back to the times of the Roosevelt Administration who came into the presidency not much more liberal than Herbert Hoover. Yet eventually Roosevelt was forced to pass the New Deal legislation. The same is true of Abe Lincoln who personally thought

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Women's History, Yesterday and Today

Fern Winston

Editor's note: The PA Board asked the chairperson of the Women's Equality Commission and member of the National Board of the CPUSA, Fern Winston, to introduce the following articles in commemoration of women's history month.

In the July 28th, 1858 edition of the newspaper *The North Star*, Frederick Douglass wrote the following:

One of the most interesting events of the past week was the holding of what is technically styled a Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls. While it is impossible for us to go into this subject at length, and dispose of the various objections which are often urged against such a doctrine as that of female equality, we are free today that in respect to political rights, we hold women to be justly entitled to all we claim for men. We go further, and express our conviction that all political rights which it is expedient for men to exercise, is equally right for women.

Those words of Frederick Douglass, written 135 years ago, are symbolic of the historic alliance of the movement for African American equality and the movement for equality for women. The importance of this alliance today, in 1993, is indicated by the fact that in U.S. government bodies and courts, and also in public organizations, when speaking of civil rights laws, reference is made to the fact that such laws benefit "minorities and women."

It is against this background of growing unity between these movements and the labor movement that we must approach the struggle for women's equality in the United States in 1993. We have the chance now to reverse the terrible assault that took place against women's reproductive and economic rights as a logical extension of the corporate attack on the living standards of the people during the Reagan-Bush years.

Bill Clinton was elected president based upon his promise to turn this situation back around. His pro-choice stance, as well as his pledge to pass family leave legislation, were instrumental in his campaign. Some of his early actions in regards to women's rights hold some promise for the future,

though he has a long way to go in fulfilling his promises.

Of course the mass popular pressure on Clinton to reverse the Reagan-Bush legacy didn't come out of nowhere. Those years saw tremendous mass demonstrations for women's rights, particularly to protect women's right to choose abortion. There was also an upsurge in the fight to defend abortion clinics against the fanatical ultra-right, struggles which often took on heroic dimensions. And there was a tremendous growth in women's recognition of the need for political independence from the Republican and Democratic parties, particularly reflected in the effort to form the 21st Century Party spearheaded by the National Organization for Women (NOW).

There are literally hundreds of women's organizations in the United States today. One of the best known is NOW. Another is the National Women's Political Caucus. The Coalition of Labor Union (CLUW) is now an accepted part of the labor movement, as is the women's committee of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU). There are a number of organizations of African American women, such as the Black Women's Health Project, as well as women's organizations devoted to various issues in the Latino communities in a number of cities. Another organization that attempts to bring economic issues and multi-racial unity to the fore has been Women for Racial and Economic Equality (WREE).

When speaking of the various organizations that make up the women's movement in the U.S. today, the Children's Defense Fund, headed by Marian Wright Edelman, must be recognized as a very important organization. Ms. Edelman can be considered part of the conscience of the nation when our treatment of children is under discussion.

There are some who, when defining the women's movement, include such groups as the Right to Life organization in that movement. Actually this group appears to spend most of its time and resources in attempting to block entrance of women and doctors to health facilities. They would do well to turn their attention to the vast problems faced by millions of women and children in this year of 1993

- including the homeless and hungry women and children in our country.

They should spend their time on the problems of children for whom, in cities large and small, the trip from home to school is like going through a war zone, infested with drugs. When children reach school, in many cases they enter a building that is overcrowded and in a dangerous state of disrepair. They should focus on the lack of adequate, affordable day care for children whose parents need to work, and the lack of educational opportunities and the futility of finding a job whether or not children make it through the educational system. They should pay attention to the growing number of illegal sweatshops, part of the Reagan/Bush legacy, in which thousands of women and children work, in some cases for less than minimum wages, in brutal and dangerous conditions.

The task of the movement for women's equality in our country is great. According to the International Labor Organization, an agency of the United Nations: "[After] more than 220 years of active workplace organization and protest, North American women, especially non-union workers ... are still highly disadvantaged in terms of low pay, job segregation, workplace harassment (and other issues of special concern to women) and inequitable family responsibilities...."

The Communist Party USA has been active in the struggle for women's equality for all of its history. Communists work to build unity between women, labor, the African American community and other oppressed minorities. We have a common enemy - the monopoly capitalist corporations that

strive to maximize profits by exploiting and dividing men and women; Black, Brown and white; young and old. Communists work in the movements of today, and at the same time work for a socialist United States as the only society in which true equality can be achieved, a society in which there will no longer be a "privileged class" - except, of course, for the children.

As part of the commemoration of Women's History Month, *Political Affairs* presents the three articles that follow. The first deals with what we might call "current history" - the role of women in electoral politics today and the growing trend toward unity of women with labor and the racially oppressed, written by Denise Winebrenner. Following that are two historical accounts of Communist women in struggle. One is based on an oral history by Anne Burlak Timpson, well known to many as the "Red Flame." The other is a sketch of Communist women's lives by Mary Licht (who, incidentally, is the same Mary Dalton charged with insurrection in Georgia along with Anne Burlak, as described in "Red Flame.")

It is clear from these accounts that the history of Communist women is women's history, and also working-class and people's history. And it is evident why this is not taught in the schools or shown on TV, why the U.S. working class has been robbed of its own history. The conclusions and lessons for today are a great threat to the ability of the ruling class to maintain its system of inequality, exploitation and poverty - capitalism. □

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African Americans were inferior and should be kept separate. Yet he had to lead the fight to defeat the slavocracy and eventually signed the Emancipation Proclamation. At the signing, honest Abe stated quite candidly a critical truth, a reality of politics, when he said, "It is not I who have controlled events but events that have controlled me."

The great wisdom of the outstanding abolitionist and mass activist, Frederick Douglass, aptly applies when he said, "Power concedes nothing without struggle.... It never did, it never will."

The other side of that truth is that people in struggle are more powerful than the power of government. Douglass understood this and we need to

understand it too. In the '60s we used to say, "Power to the people," but the truth is that the people actually have the power - the problem is to unite and organize them to exercise that power. That is what the Communist Party USA is all about. We are fighting for real freedom to fulfill the true destiny of our nation. In this great rich land of ours, there is still enough for everyone to have a happy life. As Marx put it, "Happiness should be the lot of every person." What's wrong with that? Is this not a noble goal to strive for? A society that does not promote war, racism, male supremacy, poverty, exploitation, homelessness and unemployment. A society with the fullest expression of people's democracy, not narrow capitalist democracy. That's socialism, my friends. □

Women and Political Independence

Denise Winebrenner

Last year was declared the "Year of the Woman." During the course of this remarkable election year, women entered the electoral arena in record numbers. Galvanized by 12 years of Reagan/Bush right-wing, anti-woman policies, and outraged by the televised spectacle of the Senate Judiciary Committee's mistreatment of Anita Hill, women and men responded en masse in the voting booths. This resulted in inspirational breakthroughs in women's political representation all across the country.

Illinois voters struck powerful blows at the ideological edifices of racism and male supremacy by sending Carol Moseley Braun to the U.S. Senate, the first African American woman senator in history. California voters, not content with just one woman, elected both Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer to represent them in the Senate. Patty Murray, emphasizing her working-class background, won a well earned place in the Senate from the state of Washington. Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland won handily in her election bid. In Pennsylvania, a political newcomer, Lynn Yaekel, came within two percentage points of retiring the incumbent Republican Senator Arlen Specter.

With the exception of Nancy Kassebaum, Republican of Kansas, voters in major industrial states elected women who ran on economic platforms that focused on change. Senators Braun, Murray, and Mikulski have working-class roots and ties to the trade union movement. Significantly they did not run away, as Yaekel did, from progressive women's movements. Rather, in the face of ultra-right assaults, they stood up and took principled positions on the highly charged issues of abortion, family leave and pay equity.

The strength and depth of the political processes at work is even more strikingly revealed in the results in the House of Representatives. An all-time high of 48 women, including Eleanor Holmes Norton of Washington, D.C., are for the first time venturing into the House cloak room. Voters in New Mexico dispatched the first Mexican American

woman, Lucille Roybal-Allard, to Washington to speak for them. New York City sent a clear progressive message to the Federal government as Nydia Velazquez was sworn in as the first Puerto Rican woman representative from New York. Building on the momentum created by the broad anti-Bush upsurge throughout the country, voters smashed through walls of racism and gender discrimination, strengthening the growing trend of working-class and male-female unity.

As noted by Eleanor Smeal, president of the Fund for a Feminist Majority, in the lead story of the Feminist Majority Report:

Women on election day ended the "Year of the Woman" by moving into the "Decade of the Woman." If we keep this momentum throughout the decade, we will achieve the goal of 50 percent women in Congress by the year 2000. The percentage of women in Congress doubled from five to ten percent, following Fund for the Feminist Majority predictions. Women of color more than doubled their numbers in Congress, moving from six seats to fourteen.

To underscore the broad sentiment underlying these electoral victories, the Clinton Administration was compelled to add several more women appointees to the cabinet. After the Zoe Baird fiasco, the President sent another woman, Janet Reno, up for confirmation as U.S. Attorney General. It was a breath of fresh air to see Senator Braun questioning the nominee on real issues for a change. Attorney General Reno is now the first woman to become the country's top lawyer.

Developments at the grassroots contributed mightily to the achievements of the "Year of the Woman." There are thousands of examples of women organizing around issues in response to the reactionary trends of the 1980s. One of the most significant was the revitalization of union family committees – the modern equivalent of women's auxiliaries from the CIO days. As workers' strikes and struggles against lockouts and plant closings intensified and became more and more protracted, family committees sprang up like mushrooms. Union family committees – initially organized to grapple with

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the shock, trauma and stress on working-class families precipitated by plant closings – now mobilize families and friends, inside and outside the factories, on basic issues. These committees have become a leading initiator of political action, independent of both major political parties and union politics.

One of the best organized groups is the Women's Support Committee of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 5668. This local won an important 20-month long lockout struggle against Ravenswood Aluminum Company in West Virginia. During the course of the lockout – a struggle which took on international dimensions – the Women's Support Committee not only organized mass picketing and rallies of up to 7,000 workers, but also lobbied the state legislature and introduced legislation to bar forced overtime. Similarly, the committee fought to outlaw scabbing – the company ran 1,100 scabs – and formed the backbone of the Dump Bush movement during the 1992 elections in Central West Virginia.

The women in that committee have drawn important class lessons from their hands-on experience with government from Charleston to Washington. Needless to say, they were not impressed. "This government does not work for working-class people, but we are the only ones – the ones who know what is is to pay bills and feed families – who can fix it," said Committee leader Marge Flanagan. In addition to continued support for workers' struggles throughout the region, the Committee is now seriously examining the 1993 municipal elections with the hope of running one of their own.

The Women's Support Committee is only one of hundreds of such grassroots structures now in existence that are a new feature on the scene of working-class, anti-monopoly political independence. In the wake of the devastating mass layoffs which heralded 1993, there is no reason to assume that these independent structures are a temporary phenomenon.

THIRD PARTY EFFORTS ■ Although progressive women who now hold seats in government were elected as Democrats – which in itself is a step forward after many years of bitter fights within the Democratic Party for greater women's representation – their posture within the Democratic Party is not etched in stone.

For many years now, just below the surface of Democratic Party politics, a revolt has been brewing. It exploded at the 1989 National Conference

National Organization for Women (NOW) in Cincinnati. Elected delegates, 602 strong from 48 states, declared the two-party system a failure and announced that: "NOW will support and seek to elect candidates who will move toward the feminist agenda, notwithstanding party affiliation." Delegates voted to establish a commission charged with measuring the barometric pressure of independent politics nationally. The conference also decided on a broad outline of principles which included full equality for women and an expanded Bill of Rights.

At a press conference immediately following the historic resolution, NOW president Molly Yard and Fund for a Feminist Majority president Eleanor Smeal, despite provocations by the national press corps, emphasized that the proposed new political party was not a "Women's Party."

WOMEN'S BILL OF RIGHTS ■ The program approved by delegates took the form of a seven point Women's Bill of Rights. This included: the right to freedom from sex discrimination; freedom from race discrimination; freedom from government interference in abortion, birth control and pregnancy and restoration of funding for Medicaid funding and abortion; freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; a right to a decent standard of living, including adequate food, housing, health care and education; the right to clean air, clean water, safe toxic waste disposal and environmental protection; the right to be free from violence, including from the threat of nuclear war.

Thousands of individuals and organizations, including the Communist Party, testified before hearings on independent politics around the country, carrying out the 1989 conference mandate. The 21st Century Party emerged in 1990, and is currently raising money and involving itself in efforts to legalize the birth control pill, RU 486. It has not yet fielded a slate.

In another example of NOW exercising its political independence, a handful of independent candidates seeking federal office in the 1992 elections received the endorsement of NOW/PAC, including this writer.

Clearly, the many organizations encompassing the women's movement are important players at the table of independent politics. Along with the Campaign for a New Tomorrow (the Ron Daniels presidential campaign) and Labor Party Advocates, women's political formations such as the 21st Century Party, NOW/PAC and others are key compo-

nents in the developing currents aimed at "breaking the two-party stranglehold."

As a result of the convergence of self-interests between the women's movement and other sections of the population, there is a growing trend toward unity that is gaining strength. A historic relationship exists, for example, between the struggle for women's equality and the civil rights movement, dating back over a century. This is a coalition which goes to the very roots of U.S. history, and it is a coalition which endures. Affirmative action is a product of that coalition – an example is the consent decree in steel which opened doors to thousands of Black, Brown and women workers. This growing unity trend is also revealed by the fact that for the first time, a NOW National officer, Patricia Ireland, co-chaired the Rainbow Coalition's recent Leadership Summit, which includes a significant section of labor leaders.

ROLE OF COMMUNISTS ■ An important question at this juncture is how can the Communist Party and the broader left help accelerate this growing trend and help give it an independent electoral thrust. Clearly in this regard the future lies in independent candidacies of progressive, socialist and Communist women seeking office.

All too often, because the labor, civil rights, peace, environmental and women's movements survive by the skin of our teeth, the question of running for public office seems like another item on a too full "to do" list and therefore holds little attraction. Many argue that just "keeping it together" is enough. Notwithstanding these concerns, the truth is – as one NOW leader says – "Either go for it (some level of political power) or spend the rest of your life cleaning up the mess." Great opportunities await those who are willing to accept the challenge.

U.S. Communist women now operate in a post-Cold War era. Anti-communism has declined significantly and is no longer the factor it once was. It is possible to gain the endorsement of many organizations, including the National Organization for Women/Political Action Committee (NOW/PAC). Local unions and retiree groups will quiz candidates, including Communists, on issues.

More and more civil rights organizations, school and parents groups, churches and health care organizations run sophisticated political action programs and welcome left women candidates. If the 1992 elections indicate anything, it was the importance of issues and solutions to the economic crisis. Commu-

nist women have the most advanced and developed solutions to the economic crisis – anti-monopoly solutions that go after corporate profits.

Health care is an issue where Communist women have a lot to say. Working-class women pioneered the demand for national health care, including socialized medicine. National health care was among the first demands ever raised by working-class women, and health care continues to be a field where women dominate in employment. It is one of the great scandals of capitalism that health care workers cannot afford health care and are therefore unable to avail themselves or their families of the product they produce.

Thirteen years ago, auto workers, miners and steelworkers stood in cheese lines, food lines and unemployment lines. Many tried to warn fellow workers outside of the Rust Bowl, "What goes around comes around." In the last decade of the 20th Century there is hardly a city now where white and blue collar workers aren't standing in line for welfare, food and unemployment. Good Democrats have no solutions, but Communist politicians do.

Today women have built an entire infrastructure around homeless, hungry, unemployed and battered families, that limps for a lack of political expression. The movement to organize the unemployed, hungry and homeless must have an electoral component – who but the Communists will champion their interests?

The debate around reproductive rights makes women candidates lightning rods for the ultra-right. Here too Communist women have a special role to play by building all peoples unity, stressing the ultra-right's inherently anti-family pro-corporate agenda. Reproductive rights has always been a part of the Communist agenda.

Powerful forces are aligned against women, as they are against labor, the African American people, other racially oppressed minorities, senior citizens and youth. Yet no CEO could ever organize half a million workers to march in Washington, D.C. as labor did on Solidarity Day, nor one million people to rally for Reproductive Rights, nor hundreds of thousands to march to "Save our Cities, Save our Children." No Rockefeller or Mellon, no Iacocca or Bush for that matter, could ever match the strength of a united anti-monopoly working-class and people's movement. The economic crisis demands such a movement, and that requires that more working-class and Communist women throw their hats into the ring of electoral politics. □

Working Class Heroines

Mary Licht

Women's history, overlooked and undervalued in American textbooks and literature, is rich in the number of outstanding women – women who became leaders of tens of thousands, from the time of the American Revolution, to the Civil War and its emancipation movement, to the period of the suffrage movement, trade unionism, and the modern civil rights and equality struggles. Women's role in the trade union movement is rarely mentioned, and their militant leaders remain mostly nameless in our history.

The first all-woman strike took place in New York City in 1823 and resulted in the first women's trade union: the United Tailoresses, established in 1825. The Lowell "girls'" textile strike in 1845 spread from Massachusetts to the Pennsylvania mills. These courageous women won their demands.

Few know of Lucy Parsons, an African American woman who, along with being the wife of one of the Haymarket martyrs, organized the Chicago Working Women's Union, and later influenced the Knights of Labor to admit women into their organization. It was because of her that both she and Mother Jones became members in 1878. In 1905 both women joined the Wobblies (International Workers of the World).

There were women heroes in the Socialist Party of that day who also participated in organizing unions. Socialist women were active in the strike of the "shirtwaist girls" and organized 30,000 women into the needle trades union in 1909 in New York City. Socialist women also led the Patterson, New Jersey textile strike of 1912 and the various miners strikes in the years leading up to World War I. They were also involved in the great steel strike of 1919 where Fannie Sellins, organizer of the United Mine Workers of America, working with William Z. Foster a leader of the strike, was brutally murdered by the Steel Trust gunmen at West Natrona, Pennsylvania.

Many of these women joined the Communist Party when the Socialist Party broke up over the fact

that it betrayed its own policy against America's participation in the imperialist war of 1914-18. They also left because of the Socialist Party's hostility to the Russian Revolution and the organization of the Third International. Among these outstanding women leaders were those who founded the Communist Party: Ella Reeve ("Mother") Bloor, Anita Whitney, Margaret Prevy, Rose Pastor Stokes, Hortense Allison, Rose Wortis, Margaret Krumbein, and Dora Lifshitz, to name just a few.

Philip Foner, in his *Women and the American Labor Movement*, Vol II, details the important contributions of Communist women in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union strike of 1926; in the 1929 Gastonia textile strike; in the 1927 coal companies' lockout of United Mine Workers union members in Pennsylvania; in fighting for better conditions for women workers in unions like the United Electrical Workers, United Auto Workers, UCA-PAWA and more. In addition, working-class women played a major role in building the CIO; influencing the fur workers and needle trades unions; in the leadership of the pecan pickers' strike in St. Louis (1933); in the Passaic (1926 and 1927) and New Bedford (1928) textile strikes; and in leading the unemployed, homeless and hunger demonstrations of the early 1930s. Critical to these efforts were their strong stands against racism and for Black-white unity without which these struggles would not have been successful.

During the turbulent decade of the 1930's women Communists participated actively, often as leaders, in every struggle the Party initiated and participated in: strike struggles, defense of persecuted militants and foreign born, the struggle against racist lynchings in the South, the program for the shorter work week, and for unemployment insurance and Social Security. Communist women also were among those who went into the factories and the farms to take the place of men soldiers during World War II.

After World War II, when the Cold War froze the Bill of Rights, the Party and many other organizations were attacked and their leaders arrested. Top leaders of the Party were tried and sentenced

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and, in 1952, the second Smith Act onslaught led to the arrest and trial of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Claudia Jones, Betty Gannett, Marion Bachrach, Rose Chernin, Loretta Stack, Bernadette Doyle, Dorothy Blumberg and Regina Frankfeld. Later there were others.

Below are sketched the lives and struggles of four outstanding women working-class leaders, unsung trailblazers whose courage, intelligence, and strength laid the basis for today's struggles.

ELLA REEVE BLOOR

Ella Reeve Bloor was born in 1862 in Staten Island, New York. She followed the example of her father, Charles Reeve, who fought to abolish slavery as a soldier in the Civil War. Her uncle read books to her by Ingersoll and other social scientists and philosophers, which opened up a new world of thought. After her marriage, she and her husband and children moved to Philadelphia. Shortly after that she became involved in the Kensington, Pennsylvania textile strike of 1896. At the workers' educational meetings, she became enthralled by the discussion of the need for workers to own the machines and the material they produce. At one such meeting she discovered the speaker was a socialist and declared, "I am a socialist too."

The family moved to New York, where Bloor met Eugene Debs who had just come out of jail. She asked him about his jailing and learned that the militant craft union strikes of that decade were lost because these exclusive unions were no match for the large monopolized industries. Capitalists could get the state to use federal troops and their new weapon, federal injunctions, to defeat strikes.

Debs left his craft union and organized an industrial union – the American Railway Union – whose 150,000 workers went on strike. Debs and the strike committee were immediately arrested and jailed; a federal injunction was issued, and Samuel Gompers, president of the AFL, refused to support the strike or call upon his railway locals to declare a national general strike. Without this support the strike was lost.

Ella Bloor joined the Socialist Party at its formation, led strikes and free speech struggles, ran for office, and became state organizer of the Socialist Party. At the same time she got work in the Chicago Stockyards, and collected damning evidence of brutal and unsanitary conditions in the yards that she presented to Upton Sinclair for his famous classic exposé *The Jungle*, and she reported these facts to a

Congressional investigating committee which aroused great public indignation. This led to the passage of the Federal Food Inspection Law.

She participated in the strike of 15,000 workers of the General Electric plant in Schenectady, New York in December of 1913, in which the socialist mayor of the city appointed strikers as deputies, arresting all scabs.

The Central Labor Union of Schenectady was so impressed with Ella Bloor's work, they asked her to undertake a solidarity mission to Calumet, Michigan to help the copper miners there – who had sent a delegation to picket with the GE strikers. Ella, with her daughter Annie, went to Calumet, and on Christmas eve helped to organize a party for the strikers' children. When a cry of "fire" was heard, the children started down the stairs in panic, and the stairs soon became an air tight coffin for 73 children. The culprit was never caught but most suspect it was a company agent.

A funeral was held. Ella, with her daughter carrying a big red flag, led a procession of the entire town behind the hearses on which the little coffins were piled. This tragedy was headlined in papers all over the country. Because of this event, and the fact that Ella always brought her children with her no matter what the occasion, she became known as "Mother Bloor." She never forgot those dying children – strikers' children were always her first concern.

Mother Bloor was called to Ludlow, Colorado where the miners were striking against Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel & Iron Company for union recognition. Rockefeller evicted the miners from their company houses, so the strikers built a tent colony. The governor called in the state militia at the behest of Rockefeller. The militia doused the bottom of the tents with kerosene and set them on fire. Thirteen children and one woman were killed as the militia shot the fleeing strikers.

Mother Bloor organized a thousand women, wives of the strikers, and led them to the governor's mansion. She would not leave until he had promised to end the terror against the strikers and their children and recall the militia. To this day, the miners hold memorial meetings on April 20th at the tomb of those who were killed by the militia. This tomb was erected by the United Mine Workers of America.

As Mother Bloor went East to raise relief money for the Calumet and Colorado miners, the conservative Socialist Party leaders scolded her: "You are

spending too much time on strikes and not enough on socialist work." Ella's answer was, "This is socialist work."

When the Russian Revolution flashed its message to all corners of the earth, Ella exclaimed, "This is it!" She was 57 years old, with 30 active years in the class struggle, and on September 1, 1919, she left the Socialist Party to become one of the first American Communists. For many years she was national organizer of the International Labor Defense and organized the first Sacco-Vanzetti Conference. On the day of their execution, she spoke from the open window of the Defense Committee building in Boston and was arrested.

Twice Mother Bloor, in her mid-sixties, hitchhiked across the country for the *Daily Worker* and the International Labor Defense. During 1926-27, she raised thousands of dollars in relief for the Passaic textile workers' strike. Again, during the Gastonia, North Carolina strike of 1929, she went from coast to coast, North and South, for relief and for the defense of the arrested leaders who were framed on charges of murder.

She was an organizer for the great farmers' movement of North Dakota, and organized the first United Farmers League. When the banks would try to foreclose on farms, she helped organize "penny auctions" that bought back farms under foreclosure for sums like 49 cents, and cows for 10 cents a head. They did this by mobilizing large numbers of farmers who would gather at farm auctions, and if anyone would raise a finger to bid, farmers would immediately surround the would-be buyer until the finger went back down. The farm would then be bought for a nominal fee and returned to its rightful owners. At 70 years old, Mother Bloor traveled 9,000 miles up and back to organize her "farm boys."

Ella Reeve Bloor was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and chairwoman of the National Women's Commission.

During the summer of 1934, she led the American delegation to Paris where the Women's International Congress Against War and Fascism was held.

Mother Bloor died on August 10, 1951 at 89 years of age. At her funeral, Paul Robeson, the outstanding African American figure, told the mourners: "She helped to free my own enslaved fathers. Those who loved her will carry on fearlessly." She was buried in Camden, New Jersey in a cemetery near the grave of her life-long friend Walt Whitman.

MORANDA SMITH

Moranda Smith, born in South Carolina, was the daughter of a sharecropper family. The family moved to Winston-Salem, the tobacco center of North Carolina. After graduating high school, she began working for the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, which had been established a century before by the Reynolds family, former slaveowners of the largest plantation in Virginia. Their slaveholding ideology left its imprint on the factory: 40 cents an hour; long hours; no lunch room facilities or adequate restrooms; no sick leave or vacations; no seniority, paid holidays or job security. True to form, Reynolds segregated African American workers into the worst jobs at the lowest pay.

In 1941, a small committee of four African American workers, including Moranda Smith, asked the CIO for aid in organizing this gigantic plant. After many months they established Local 22 of the Food, Tobacco, Agriculture, and Allied Workers Union (FTA), CIO, with 9,000 dues paying members. Reynolds and the War Labor Board refused to recognize the organization, despite the fact that the War Board had a stated policy of equal pay for equal work, which was the union's primary demand. Despite these rebuffs, the organizing drive continued.

Eleven thousand Reynolds workers, Black and white united, struck the plant in June of 1943 when an African American worker died after the foreman denied him permission to see a doctor. Moranda Smith became the leader of the strike, which held firm despite threats of government intervention. They won union recognition and \$1,250,000 in retroactive pay to the low paid workers in the leaf-house and stemmeries. On April 24, 1944, the first contract was signed and wages began a steady climb upwards. This Winston-Salem strike is considered legendary.

Moranda Smith was elected to the national executive board of the FTA in 1946, the first African American woman ever to serve on the executive council of a national union. On May 1, 1947, some 10,000 tobacco workers – 80 percent African American and most of them women – struck Reynolds again. The strike held strong despite violence against them, their eviction from company houses and the intervention of the Un-American Activities Committee (the Dies Committee, later HUAC) which began investigating the leaders of Local 22 on the grounds that it was a "Communist-dominated" union. The investigation made headlines in the Win-

ston-Salem press, but the militant strikers were not intimidated. On July 1, Paul Robeson spoke and sang at a mass meeting of 12,000 in Winston-Salem where the theme was "full support for Local 22."

The strike lasted 38 days before they won. Moranda Smith was the negotiator. She stood up against the racist company and the workers won a wage increase, paid overtime, holidays and vacations and, significantly, the recognition of an African American woman on the negotiating committee.

In November 1947, Moranda Smith attended the Constitutional Convention of the CIO. She spoke against the Taft-Hartley Bill which was being debated in Congress, and challenged the CIO to take action, including political action, to defeat it. She warned, however, that there could not be meaningful political action "when African Americans in the South are not allowed to vote." She returned to Winston-Salem and initiated a voter registration drive. Winston-Salem became the first Southern city to elect an African American, Reverend Kenneth Williams, to City Council.

In 1948, Moranda Smith, a known Communist, was appointed Assistant Director of the FTA's Southern Atlantic region, becoming regional director in September 1949. In January 1950, she became International Representative of the Southern region. As a member of the union's National Executive Board, she occupied the highest position an African American had held up to that time in the labor movement.

On April 14, 1950, Moranda Smith died at the age of 35 after suffering a stroke. Funeral services were held in the largest church in Winston-Salem, with thousands gathering in the streets. On her tombstone is inscribed the following:

Here rests a courageous leader who devoted her life to the struggle of all workers - Negro and white. Her memory will live on to inspire others in the cause of achieving world peace and a happy life for toiling humanity.

ANITA WHITNEY

Anita Whitney was born on July 7, 1867. A true daughter of the heritage of the American Revolution, she followed these traditions, championing the cause of working people against every form of discrimination, and for the cause of peace.

In 1893 Anita Whitney became a social worker and entered a settlement house at Rivington Street, New York City. It was an appalling revelation of human suffering: child labor, frequent fires and

poverty stricken immigrants. Her whole life was radically altered by her three months stay at this Lower East Side settlement house.

Whitney moved to California, seeking a remedy for the poverty she had seen. She threw herself into charity work. As Executive Secretary of the Alameda County Charities for seven years, her experience convinced her that charity was no solution for the socioeconomic ills of society. At the time of the earthquake of April 1906, she worked day and night in the relief of the victims at Golden Gate Park. Her first contact with labor unions was in the effort to find employment for the sufferers of the earthquake.

In 1909 and 1911, women's suffrage was on the California ballot, and as state president of the College Equal Suffrage League, Anita Whitney led her forces to victory. California became the sixth "Free State" where women won full voting rights and the right to serve on juries. Recognition on a national scale won her the Second Vice-Presidency of the American Equal Suffrage Association in 1911. She helped to organize the suffrage campaign in Oregon and Nevada in 1912 and 1913, and was successful in this campaign too. She also supported the IWW's Free Speech Fight in San Diego in 1912.

Whitney participated in the California Wheatlands hop pickers' strike in 1913, and helped defend their leaders against frame-up charges of murder following a riot provoked by county officers. This was the first labor frame-up case in California.

Anita Whitney joined the Socialist Party in 1913 believing "that people shall eventually control and own the tools of production." She remained in the Socialist Party until the left wing split off. During the war hysteria of 1916, trade unionists Tom Mooney and Warren Billings were arrested - they were shamefully framed for a bomb explosion in the War Preparation Day Parade of July 24, 1916. They were sentenced to die, and Anita became part of their defense team. Because of her efforts and national and international pressure, Mooney and Billings' sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. Whitney became part of a long lasting fight for their freedom. Mooney was released in January, 1939 and Billings in October, 1939.

Recognized as a loyal defender of African American rights, Anita was elected to the first executive committee of the California branch of the NAACP. She was also chairwoman of the American-Irish Education League, a women's group organized to help secure Irish independence. A great portion of her activity was centered in the African

American and Irish American liberation movements.

After the split in the Socialist Party in 1919, the Oakland chapter voted to join the new Communist Party, and thus Anita Whitney became a charter member of the Communist Party.

Anita was arrested on November 28, 1919 on the occasion of an address delivered at the Oakland Civic Center on "The Negro Problem in the United States." She was charged and convicted of criminal syndicalism. While out on bail, pressure of public opinion finally won her a pardon by the governor of California on June 20, 1927.

Whitney remained an active Communist Party member, energetically participating in every field of Communist work. In 1936, at 69 years of age, she ran for Secretary of State on the CP line and polled 100,820 votes, which qualified the Party to get on the ballot. In the ensuing years, she ran for the offices of Oakland County Supervisor, State Controller, and for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

In May of 1936 she was elected chairperson of the California Communist Party, reelected in 1938, and elected the same year as member of the CP National Committee. She also spoke in many cities with Mother Bloor, celebrating their joint birthdays (Whitney's 75th and Mother Bloor's 80th) - all to encourage membership in the Party.

ANITA TORREZ

Anita Torrez was born in 1926 in the farm-mining territory of the Gila Valley in New Mexico. She married Lorenzo Torrez, now chairperson of the Communist Party's Chicano Commission and Arizona District, who was her schoolmate in elementary and high school. Anita joined him in Hanover, New Mexico, where he worked in a copper mine after returning from fighting fascism in World War II.

In October, 1950 a strike broke out in the copper mines. This strike will go down in history not only because it lasted two years, involving all the workers, but also because it was dramatized in the movie *Salt of the Earth* in which Anita Torrez appears. It was written, directed and produced by victims of

the Hollywood blacklist, who worked together with the militants of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union (MMSWU) to produce it.

The mine owners believed it would be easy to break the strike, and they wanted to use it to destroy the left-led MMSWU. After six months of peaceful picketing, the mine owners won an injunction in which the miners were enjoined from picketing. The women took over the picket lines, continuing the strike for another year and a half.

Anita Torrez became a leading force on the picket line, which fought the scabs, sheriffs, and the local and state police. What at times looked like a hopeless strike was finally victorious through the unity of Chicano, Black and white workers, supported by their wives and families.

During the anti-Communist drive in 1949, the MMSWU was expelled from the CIO along with eleven other left-led unions. Clint Jenkins, the international representative of the MMSWU, refused to sign the anti-Communist oath and was convicted of conspiracy. At hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee, the government tried to prove that the union was sabotaging the war in Korea by calling strikes. Anita Torrez was elected to go to Canada to tour mining towns to raise funds for the defense. The charges were eventually dropped when a witness against Jenkins recanted.

Anita and Lorenzo Torrez both joined the Communist Party at the height of the McCarthy period. Anita became an organizer for the MMSWU in the mining camp of Superior, Arizona where repeated organizing drives had failed. Her diligent activities brought to fruition union organization in Superior.

The Western and Rocky Mountain states is an area in which great historical struggles have taken place. The strike described in the movie *Salt of the Earth*, and the numerous miners' struggles led by the IWW and Western Federation of Miners, are all part of labor's legacy in this region, in which Mexican Americans form a significant portion of the labor force. Unity is the touchstone, and as one of the women in *Salt of the Earth* stated: "I don't want to push anyone lower than me. I want to push everyone up with me. Together we will win!" □

Red Flame

Ann Timpson

I was born in a little mining town in Pennsylvania called Slatington, and I grew up in the city of Bethlehem, dominated by Bethlehem Steel Company. My father was a steel worker.

Our family consisted of my parents and four children. I was the oldest, and the only girl. When I was 14, in 1925, I went to work in a textile mill, which is what many of the wives and daughters of steel workers did. It was a mill of almost 1,000 workers.

I ran up against discrimination on the very first day. When I spoke to the foreman – there was a whole string of young teenagers waiting to be interviewed for jobs – he told me they could hire me as a learner to become a weaver in the silk mill. The hours would be 54 hours a week – ten hours a day, Monday through Friday and four hours on Saturday – and the wages would be \$9 a week for the training period which would take about three months.

Behind me in the line was a young man, and the foreman told him he would also be hired as a learner to be a weaver for 54 hours a week, but that he would be paid \$12. At that point I spoke up and said that it wasn't fair, and this foreman sort of smiled, sneered perhaps, and said, "Oh Annie, you know that boys need more money than girls." I said I didn't agree with that, but I also didn't want to lose the job before I got started.

I had many conversations with my father about unions. He was a strong union man, even though Bethlehem Steel was not yet organized. He took me to various events that helped my labor education. For instance, the very first public outdoor meeting I remember attending when I was about six years old and sitting on my father's shoulders – there was a young woman urging people help her to save the life of her husband. It was Reeva Mooney. Her husband, Tom Mooney, the labor organizer framed up on a murder charge, was at that time facing the death penalty – he would have been executed except for the large outpouring of protest by people all over the world. I've often thought back to that first

experience as I grew older and learned more about unions and the class struggle.

In 1926, 6,000 textile workers went out on strike in Passaic, New Jersey. It was a wildcat strike – they were organized into the United Textile Workers, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) union in textile, and the union didn't approve of the strike. The AFL was organized along craft lines and was opposed to industrial organization and class struggle trade unionism.

Left-wing workers of various organizations, especially the Communists, went into Passaic to help support that strike with solidarity actions. They contacted many people throughout the country, especially in the East, to help support the strike. They called for the spread of the strike to other textile mills in that city, and 16,000 workers finally were out on strike in Passaic. Some of the people involved were Communist leaders like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Ella Reeve Bloor better known as Mother Bloor.

I went to a meeting with my father in Bethlehem to hear about the strike. The speaker was Mother Bloor. She had six children, by the way, and very often would take them with her to public meetings, and had them sit right in the front row and participate.

I was very impressed with her talk. She came there specifically to introduce the *Daily Worker* – the Communist Party's newspaper – to the people in Bethlehem. She talked about the Passaic strike in particular, and about Sacco and Vanzetti and Tom Mooney. For the first time I began to really learn about these heroes of the labor movement.

Mother Bloor spoke without notes – she was quite an orator. She had piercing dark eyes and white hair. When she talked to the audience she would look from face to face, and every so often I got the distinct impression that she was looking right at me. And after the meeting she came over to me and said, "I assume you're a school girl." I told her that no, I was working in the textile mill. She asked me questions and I told her how difficult it was to organize. She told me I should get together with other young people who might be interested.

Anne Burlak Timpson is a member of the National Committee CPUSA. Based on an oral history.

And then she asked me if I had ever heard of the Young Communist League and she talked to me about it, and told me there would be other young people in a similar situation in the YCL. And I was impressed so I joined. That was 1927. By the way, none of us had cars in those days so I used to hitchhike from Bethlehem to Philadelphia to attend YCL meetings. I wouldn't advise that to young people today! At the next convention of the Young Communist League I was elected to the state committee.

Around that time, the trade unions were having big discussions about whether the form of union organization should be craft or industrial unions. The Communists were very involved in these discussions and of course advocated industrial unions. William Z. Foster, who went on to become the Communist Party's chairman, was the head of that movement. The Communists advocated forming unions on the basis of a single local union for a mill or shop, so that everybody from weaver to loom fixer to sweeper would all be part of one local. This discussion was having very interesting results throughout the whole country.

In September of 1928 the National Textile Workers Union (NTWU) was formed, as part of a campaign to organize industrial unions outside of the AFL. That was under the advice of the Trade Union Educational League, headed by William Z. Foster. A call was issued to unorganized textile workers to get together in groups in the various mills and elect representatives to come to the founding convention. Five of us were elected from our mill in Bethlehem. The new union was based on an industrial form of organization, and a class struggle rather than collaborationist approach.

WOMEN'S COMMITTEES ▣ Since there were so many women in the textile mills, one of the decisions was that wherever a union local was organized special women's committees would be set up. This was because women had special grievances and special demands. These included equal pay for equal work, ending night work for women, maternity leave with pay for eight weeks before and eight weeks after giving birth. And we called for child care to be paid for by the employers – which was a radical thing to do in those years.

Another reason for forming women's committees was the problem of women hesitating to speak up in union meetings – they would tend to hold back. We found it necessary to organize special meetings of women only so that they would feel free

to speak up.

At that time, the textile companies hired very few African Americans, and usually they were given the dirtiest jobs. But our union had a non-discrimination clause, and the union didn't bar anybody who worked for the company to be members of the union.

At this founding union convention I met a whole number of young people like myself who were interested in organizing unions. The most exciting thing that happened there for me was meeting some of the textile workers from New Bedford, Massachusetts who were on strike against a ten percent wage cut. They walked into the convention hall with placards with great spirit and militancy.

The New Bedford strike began with 3,000 workers who were organized in the AFL union, the United Textile Workers union. Again, it was the Communists who went into New Bedford and issued leaflets calling upon workers to come out of all the mills. So also, in various towns we organized solidarity actions to raise money and collect food and support the strike.

By the time of our union convention there were 30,000 workers on strike with all the mills closed down. One of the tactics that was used was mass picketing to keep out the scabs, involving the families and neighbors of strikers, including children of ten and older.

In 1929, the left-wing movement in Bethlehem organized its May Day meeting, as part of May Day demonstrations all over the world. I was asked to be chairperson (we used to call it "chairman!") That was a new experience for me.

We held a meeting in a Hungarian workers' hall. Just about the time we were supposed to start, our speaker had not yet arrived but the meeting was raided suddenly by the police. They came in and looked around for whom to arrest.

There was nothing yet happening on the platform, and so they sent a couple of cops upstairs, where they came across a meeting of a fraternal society – about ten men there, mostly steel workers, who were collecting money for health insurance and so on. When the police came across these ten men speaking a foreign language, they placed them under arrest and chained them all together.

Then they came downstairs, and the head policeman held up a copy of the leaflet advertising the meeting and said, "Which one of you is Anne Burlak?" Of course I didn't say anything nor did anyone else. I was standing about six feet from him,

he looked at me and I smiled. So he just led these men out.

Just as they began loading them into the police van, the local Communist Party leader spoke up and said, "Why are you arresting these men? You are breaking the law of the land by violating the constitution." So they arrested him too.

Then I looked up the street, and here comes Bill Murdock, our speaker for the evening. I ran to meet him and said, "Bill, I think you'd better not go any closer, you'll get arrested," and I told him what had happened. He didn't say anything, he just pushed me aside, went up to the police and said, "What's going on here?" So they arrested him too. To this day, I've often wondered why he refused to listen to me – did he feel like he had to show courage, or was it that he was not interested in taking advice from a 17-year old girl?

I went to work as usual on Monday morning, but at around noon I was asked to come to the office. There was the leader of the police raid and he said, "So you're Anne Burlak. Why didn't you speak up the other night?" And I said, "Because I figured you would arrest me." And he said, "You bet. You're under arrest now!" And the foreman of my department told me to collect my things because I was fired too.

I got bailed out, and then we set up a defense committee. I was head of it. We issued leaflets saying we had been arrested because we were conducting a campaign to organize unions, and this was a violation of our civil liberties.

During the period when we were out on bail we had a public meeting in front of the gate of Bethlehem Steel since most of the arrested men were steel workers. I was asked to speak at the meeting, and it was suggested to me that I tell about the case and read the Bill of Rights. When I began reading the Bill of Rights – I had just gotten to the First Amendment – two policemen galloped up to me and pulled me off the platform. When I tried to continue, one of the policemen slapped me across the face and held his hand against my mouth so I couldn't speak.

There was a group of newspaper people, and among them was a young reporter named Joe North (who would later become editor of the *Daily Worker*). He stepped up and said, "You can't do that!" And the policeman said, "Oh no? You're arrested too." Joe North then spent the night in jail.

INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM ■ In 1929, the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) convention took place in

Cleveland. At that convention there were 690 delegates from 18 states. Some were from newly organized industrial unions, with a combined membership of 57,000 workers. William Z. Foster was elected chairman, and for the first time two women were elected to the national council of the TUUL: Rose Wortis from the Needle Trades Union in New York, and Anne Burlak – myself.

Of the 690 delegates, 159 were from newly organized left unions around the country. There were 64 African American delegates, 72 women, and 150 young people. It was quite an exciting convention!

There had been differences of opinion on the left, including in the Party, over whether we should work within the AFL unions or try to organize independent unions. It was the Trade Union Educational League primarily that functioned within the AFL unions, agitating for industrial unionism from within. When the AFL began expelling a lot of these people – including whole locals and amounting to tens of thousands of workers – there was a demand to organize independent left-wing unions. That's how the Trade Union Unity League was born.

Around that same time, we learned about the terrible situation in Gastonia, North Carolina, where workers from the Loray mill were on strike. There too, most of the workers – maybe 60 percent – were women.

One of the resolutions at our National Textile Workers Union convention was that we should send organizers into the South. The mills were already beginning to move out of the Northern states down South, and it so happened that Gastonia was one of the areas where union organizers had been sent in.

That Gastonia strike was very militant. It's interesting to note that the class issue was easy to point out to workers there, because most of the politicians – governors, congressmen, senators – owned mills. There was no doubt which side they were on.

When the workers became militant on the picket line, the employers began evicting them from company houses and threw the furniture out of their homes. The union immediately sent out a call for help, and set up a tent city. At one point, the police arrived at the tent colony with sawed off shotguns to search for militant strikers. They began shooting, a couple of the union people were wounded, and then a fire fight broke out in the process of which the chief of police was killed.

They arrested over 80 people and charged them with conspiracy to commit murder. Among those arrested were militant strikers and the union orga-

nizers – half a dozen or so who came from the North. And of course these organizers were not only referred to as Yankees but “Damn Yankees!”

Eventually, charges were dropped against most, but 17 were tried. Among the 17 were three women organizers: Sophie Melvin, Vera Bush, and Amy Schecter. That ended in a mistrial, and by the time it was tried again charges were dismissed against some, including the women, but seven were tried. These seven were convicted, with the organizers sentenced to 17 to 20 years in prison and the local workers getting somewhat lesser sentences.

One of the most horrendous acts against the strikers in Gastonia was the murder of Ella Mae Wiggins. She was a remarkable woman and very popular with the workers. She had a nice signing voice, and she made up union songs and sang them at meetings and picket lines – she was quite a troubadour. She was about 29 at that time, and had nine children, of whom only five survived.

One day a group of young women and men were driving in a truck to join a mass picket line. They were shot at and she was killed. That created quite a lot of protest.

In the meantime, strikes were breaking out all over the Carolinas, Georgia and Virginia. The union decided to call for more organizers to go down into North and South Carolina. It was around that time that I was asked to become a union organizer. By that time I was blacklisted in Bethlehem – I had lost several mill jobs – so I agreed to become an organizer.

ORGANIZING IN THE SOUTH ■ I went to Greenville, South Carolina, which was at the center of the textile area.

All I had to go on were the names Mother Bloor had given me of two old friends of hers from her IWW days: Lucius and Ala McNeil. I arrived at their house, and Mr. McNeil came to the door – he looked very much like the Kentucky Fried Colonel. I told him I brought greetings from Mother Bloor. They welcomed me with open arms, and when I said I was there to organize textile workers they said, “Oh wonderful, wonderful!” And where was I going to stay? Since I hadn’t the slightest idea, they invited me to stay with them.

Incidentally, when I was coming down South on the bus, I noticed the sharecroppers’ shacks along the road and some in the mill villages, and it reminded me of how a Party member from Boston, an African American man named Richard B. Moore,

had described these Southern shacks: “They were so built that you could study astronomy through the roof, biology through the sides, and geology through the floor!”

I spent about half a year in Greenville, and we had to use very careful methods in organizing there. We couldn’t issue a leaflet calling workers to come out to a mass meeting – we had to visit from house to house. We decided to organize on the basis of having groups in each department, and as soon as a group would reach ten workers we’d move on to the next department.

I was in Greenville on March 6, 1930, which was a day of nationwide protest, initiated by the Party, for unemployment insurance. On that same day, 100,000 turned out in New York and a total of one million around the country, in a massive, somewhat spontaneous people’s protest. William Z. Foster and other Party leaders were arrested in New York for organizing the rally and served six months.

One of the most significant aspects of the period of the 1930s was that we had to organize *both* the unemployed and employed workers – you couldn’t effectively deal with one without the other. The Communist Party’s 1930 convention was kind of a watershed event in that regard. The program that was outlined at that convention was very important and had a great effect on the events that were to unfold in the country.

You have to keep in mind that at that time, 1930, pretty much no one saw the need for, or the possibility of, organizing the unemployed. This included the leadership of the AFL.

The 1930 Party convention adopted what you might call a three-point program for dealing with the unemployment crisis. First, the decision was made for Communists to get into organizing the unemployed, and a call went out for a founding convention to organize the National Unemployed Councils. The second was a decision to file a bill calling for unemployment insurance from the government and the employers, and that bill was indeed filed by Congressman Lundeen from the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party. And the third point in the program was to organize a committee within the AFL for unemployment insurance. And though in 1932 the leadership of the AFL still rejected the concept of unemployment insurance as “the dole,” by 1934, after a lot of hard work by this committee formed within the AFL, between two and three thousand locals had endorsed unemployment insurance. So in 1934 the AFL leadership reversed them-

selves and supported the bill. Though that particular bill was defeated, by August of 1935 Roosevelt signed the Social Insurance bill, introduced by Robert Wagner of New York, and that is how we got our unemployment insurance.

"INSURRECTION" IN GEORGIA ■ In Atlanta, Georgia, in May of 1930, a meeting had been called to support unemployment insurance and to pass a federal law against lynching which was very prevalent at that time. Leaflets were distributed calling on Black and white to unite and fight. Two people were arrested for distributing leaflets for this meeting: the district organizer of the Communist Party and the district organizer of the YCL. Another meeting was called to protest these arrests.

I was asked to come and speak at that meeting, along with a young woman named Mary Dalton – who was our union organizer in Georgia – and a Black man named Herbert Newton. The chairman was an African American printer by the name of Storey from Atlanta. Before the meeting even began, the police broke in and arrested us.

At first we were charged with the very minimum – disorderly conduct. We spent the night in jail. The next morning we were taken before the clerk of the court. And then the county commissioner came in – he was County Commissioner during the week and Baptist minister on Sunday – and made an impassioned speech: "These people are guilty of something much more serious than disorderly conduct. There's an insurrection law in the state of Georgia and that calls for the death penalty."

This law, incidentally, was passed in slavery days and it said that if a slave or person of color takes part in or advocates insurrection against his "master" or the state, they shall be punished by death. After the Civil War and the overthrow of Reconstruction, this law was amended to take out the words "slave" and "master" so that any person advocating or taking part in so-called insurrection against the state of Georgia would be punished by death.

We were charged with insurrection, and held without bail – including the two arrested for distributing leaflets. It was the worst experience, I think, I went through in my organizing days, because we were completely cut off from the outside world for between five and six weeks. During that time we had no visitors, no letters either in or out, no reading material, no newspapers. In fact, at one point

Mary and I decided that we certainly couldn't get the *Daily Worker* but maybe we could at least get the *New York Times* – so we approached the warden about it; "What, that radical newspaper?" said the Warden. "No sir!"

When bail was finally granted, I was the first one to get out because my friends, the McNeils, came down from Greenville and bailed me out. When the Party's 1930 convention took place, I was invited to come and tell about our experience. The convention voted to make this a major issue in the campaign to organize the unorganized.

At that time also, the International Labor Defense decided to send me on a Coast-to-Coast tour, to tell about our case – called the Atlanta Six – to show how efforts to organize the unorganized and for Black-white unity were met by the authorities in the South and how violence was used against labor and the African American people, and also to raise money for bail for the others.

We had very successful meetings on this tour, in part because the newspapers dramatized it with headlines saying things like: "19-Year Old Girl Facing Death in Georgia to Speak Here." People just flocked to the meetings.

After the tour, the prosecution kept postponing our trial and never explained why; we came to the conclusion that there was a conflict among the authorities in Georgia about whether they had a strong enough case to make the insurrection law stick, and whether they wanted to risk the example of Black and white men and women standing trial and defending their common interests.

Two years later, in 1932, Angelo Herndon was asked by the Party to come to Atlanta from Alabama to be youth organizer for the Unemployed Councils. He was a miner's son and had worked in the mines himself. He was only 18.

Angelo issued a leaflet saying that people were going hungry and the authorities weren't doing anything; so we should organize, join the unemployed councils and build a strong movement of the unemployed. The Mayor of Atlanta issued one of those stupid statements that politicians often do saying: "No one's going hungry in Atlanta. That's Communist propaganda! If anybody misses a meal now and then, they know they can come to City Hall and be fed."

Angelo then issued a leaflet saying: "The mayor says that if anybody is going hungry in Atlanta they can come to City Hall and be fed. We know that individually we can't accomplish anything, and

therefore our recommendation is that we all come there on such-and-such a day at such-and-such an hour, and demand to be fed." That leaflet was distributed, and when the time came 1,000 people showed up. Angelo got up and made a rip-roaring speech about how it was necessary to organize and fight, and not starve.

He was making this speech on the City Hall stairs with 1,000 people gathered there, and didn't get arrested. But the next morning when he went alone to the Post Office to get his mail the police were waiting for him.

He was charged under the insurrection law, and here they thought they had a good case: a young Black man from Alabama who made that speech on the stairs of City Hall, "stirring up the people" as the newspapers said. So they decided to try his case before ours, to establish a precedent. He was held without bail.

Angelo Herndon was convicted, though the jury recommended "mercy" – meaning 20 years on the chain gang. Then came the fight to appeal his case and get him out on bail. He went through all the courts in Georgia, and was again found guilty. And that was appealed as well. He spent a lot of time in jail, though at one point he did get out on bail and he made a nationwide tour.

The case reached the Supreme Court in 1935, and the Court voted not to consider it and to send it back into the Georgia court system. We went through all those courts again and made a national campaign of it. We decided to collect a million signatures in support of Angelo Herndon – by the time we were through we had collected two million. All the African American newspapers in the country supported Angelo Herndon's fight for freedom. And it became a constitutional issue: we were determined to declare that law unconstitutional.

It came all the way up to the Supreme Court again in 1937. By that time the Supreme Court had changed; Roosevelt was charged with "packing" it, and more importantly, the CIO drive for industrial unions was in full swing and there was a whole new atmosphere in the country. So the 1937 Supreme Court declared that law unconstitutional.

We were finally released from bail and were never tried.

"RED FLAME" ■ The story of how I acquired the name "Red Flame" is somewhat revealing about how our "objective" media treats trade unions and Communists.

It was in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1931. Our union had been organizing there for several months, applying many of the organizing techniques we learned in the South. The companies tried injunctions and we broke them with mass picketing.

The bosses used the federal government – the Immigration Department – to arrest non-citizens and hold them for deportation. We had three organizers in Lawrence, and all three were non-citizens: Pat Devine who was Irish; Bill Murdock (the tardy speaker for our May Day rally in Bethlehem in 1929) who was Scottish; and Edith Berkman who was born in Poland. They were all arrested; Devine and Murdock were deported and remained active in the left-wing movements overseas, and Edith Berkman was held for deportation and developed tuberculosis while incarcerated.

I was asked to go into Lawrence to take charge of the strike, where some 20,000 workers from several mills were out. The workers were sticking together very well.

The bosses had a religious group to urge workers to go back to work and be thankful that the American Woolen Company gave them the opportunity to have jobs. At one of their meetings a priest gave a sermon titled: "Only the meek shall enter the kingdom of heaven." And he said in the course of his sermon: "You should be especially careful not to have anything to do with that woman organizer," speaking about Edith Berkman, "Because she is the Red Flame from hell!" And the papers picked it up.

I came in a day or two later to take charge of the strike, and there was a headline in the Lawrence paper saying, "One Red Flame goes to jail and another one rises in her place!" And they began to embellish things: I had red hair, I wore red clothes, wherever I showed up there would be violence, and so on. Of course, generally the violence was against the strikers.

So that's how it started. And anytime the press would write anything about me they would always say, "Anne Burlak, the Red Flame."

Most of our activities, especially after 1931, were in organizing the Unemployed Councils. So I was very active in that and in campaigning for the unemployment insurance bill. There was a big hunger march in 1931, and then there was another one in December, 1932. I became the leader of the New England contingent of the 1932 march.

People came down from Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire, we had a big rally on Boston Common, and then about 100 of us left from Boston in

old jalopies and panel trucks, on our way to Washington. As we traveled, the Unemployed Councils in each city would meet us on the edge of town and would march through the streets with us. We were fed and put up for the night, the women usually in private homes and the men in union halls and church basements.

It was a very well organized movement, and it was a way that we came in contact with many unemployed people for the first time. We picked up people as we went along. The Communist Party was fully involved and so was the Trade Union Unity League.

At the 1932 convention of the National Textile Workers Union I was elected National Secretary. I'm quite sure I was the youngest national secretary of a union in the United States (I was 21). I'm quite sure also I was the only woman national union officer at that time.

I was arrested a number of times during the strike struggles over the years, but cases were usually dropped after the strikes were over. I was also arrested for deportation one time. The authorities thought I was Polish, and they said they would deport me to Poland until I produced by baptism certificate from a Catholic church (my Mom was a devout Catholic).

In 1934 there was a national textile strike, at which time our union agreed to merge with the United Textile Workers in order to have one big union. The UTW wanted our union members but not our organizers! And the employers were issuing statements that they would "never negotiate with a Red union," that they were only willing to work with a "pure, Americanized union." In the interests of unity, we merged and I lost my job.

I became a Communist through organized activities. I didn't go to college or even high school. I became interested in the movement through organizing the unorganized and organizing the unemployed, putting people back into their homes when they were evicted and other militant actions.

Being a Communist was very important in being able to see beyond any single defeat – even to see beyond the victories. We had numerous discussions, for example about organizing the unorganized. The Party brought together people's experiences from many different areas, which gave us a whole new perspective on how to conduct our work.

But more than that, the Party saw the campaign to organize the unemployed as an organic part of

the movement to organize the unorganized. Developing the links – unity between employed and unemployed workers – was something very important we brought to the movement, and it was unique. We thought in terms of class struggle. Unemployed and employed workers, Black and white workers, men and women workers, were all part of the same class. And we saw it all as part of the process of bringing our country closer to socialism.

By 1938, there were 800,000 unemployed workers organized into unemployed councils, and there wasn't a major city anywhere that didn't have at least one unemployed council. We campaigned on the basis that it was necessary for the union movement and the unemployed to work closely together. That meant convincing the unemployed workers that they should not scab – and the fact was that fewer unemployed workers scabbed in that period than ever before. And it meant urging workers with jobs to support the fight for unemployment insurance, so that when they became unemployed they would have insurance too.

The important thing for today is solidarity. For example, the solidarity actions that took place for the Pittston miners – all the union delegations that went to support them – have to be organized wherever there is a labor struggle. And we've got to find the ways to organize the unemployed. We have a different situation now because it's much more possible to organize the unemployed through the unions than it was in the early 1930s. And there needs to be unity developed between all working people: Black, Brown, white; men and women; young and old; working and unemployed.

As for the situation with the Clinton Administration – Clinton is better than Bush or Reagan. Those two reminded me very much of Hoover who said that government didn't owe the people anything, and whose solution to handling the unemployed was with a police club.

But Clinton has a tendency to compromise, and to move to the right unless there's a lot of people's pressure put on. I do think he'll be more likely to move in a positive direction than Bush or Reagan. The main thing is that we have an opportunity now to form the kinds of movements that will put on the pressure needed to move things forward. That's the difference. □

Alvaro Vàsquez Communist Party of Colombia

Editor's note: Alvaro Vàsquez del Real is a well known figure in Colombia. He is a member of the Colombian Congress representing the Patriotic Union which groups different left organizations, among them the Communist Party. In 1986, Vasquez was shot by paramilitary hitmen and gravely wounded and became one of the victims of the government's war against the left in which more than a dozen members of the Party's Central Committee have been killed.

Question: Can you tell us something about the current situation in Colombia?

Answer: Let's start with a look at the current political situation. The most outstanding feature in the country now is the continuous tendency of President Gaviria's government to move towards the right, even though this administration was elected in 1990 with a strong component in its program for reforming and modernizing the country.

The nucleus of the government's team consists of U.S. university professors, technicians from private industry, and young Liberal and Conservative politicians (the two traditional Colombian political parties). It also includes a leader of the M-19, the movement that ended the guerrilla struggle and made a deal with the government, giving up arms in exchange for some political and personal advantages for its leadership.

At first the new government participated in the Constituent Assembly. This Assembly was convened in response to a long and persistent public call to modify the obsolete and reactionary institutions of the old 1886 constitution. The Assembly sealed an agreement between the government, the M-19 and the conservative representatives of the traditional right.

As a result of this agreement a new Constitution was adopted in 1991. This document is contradictory – its positive aspects relate to individual rights and social guarantees and possibilities of mass participation, yet the Constitution also has ingredients

of authoritarianism and exclusivity, which coincide with the old traditions of the ruling class.

The developing social and political processes have polarized forces in the nation. The administration has compromised with the International Monetary Fund program – a neo-liberal economic and financial policy similar to that for other Latin American countries. The governing team is trying an avalanche of measures: eliminating subsidies and social security, state intervention in the economic process, privatizing state enterprises, etc. The picture is well known – it is today's capitalist trend.

This economic program has shocked the system and the governing parties, along with the industrial and agrarian bourgeoisie, and has isolated the middle sectors who have now understood that achieving modernization is at its own cost. This program has also affected wide sections of workers and farmers. It has marginalized the big cities. At this moment, especially the labor movement is involved in actions, mobilizations and protests against the consequences that the neo-liberal plan has on the people's standard of living.

The government's economic policy has had consequences for the relationship of political forces in Colombia. It has discredited the government and diminished its public standing. All opinion polls during 1992 showed the most negative reaction to the government's policy.

Contributing to this deterioration is also the total failure of the government to stop groups trafficking in narcotics, as well as the escape from a "high security" prison of the cartel chief, Pablo Escobar in July, 1992. In addition, the clear incapacity of the administration to solve such obvious problems as the crises in public services, transportation, the highway infrastructure and education is exacerbating the situation. For example, we are now going to complete a year of rationing energy and electric power six hours a day. All of this has been augmented by the demagogy of the president who has implemented a so-called "development plan" and a supposed "peaceful revolution" based on the modern theses of "investment in human capital."

How does the government try to compensate for

its decline in popularity? Theoretically the government could have made a different choice as to its policy, and could have questioned the deep injustice and misery of the population where even the official documents acknowledge that in a country of 30 million nearly 13 million live below the poverty line. The government could have taken on, if not a progressive, at least a favorable attitude towards the solution of the sharpest social problems.

But to the contrary, in the second half of 1992 – in inverse proportion to his credibility crisis – the president and his faithful followers increased their resistance to democratic guarantees and popular demands, relying more and more on support from militaristic sections and the staunch right wing from within and outside of the establishment which insistently demand a strong hand against the people. They pursued a policy of no negotiations with the guerrillas, acceleration of privatization, suppression of labor rights, repressive measures against the social movements, a change in foreign policy, etc.

The class characteristics of this course towards militarism and reaction is the taking of power, ever more solidly, by financial groups, the banking oligarchy and the sponsors of the new right. The system brazenly benefits top financial circles which take advantage of corruption in the administration.

This has resulted in a shift in power among the bourgeoisie and the substitution of one group whose base was in industry and who, along with the big coffee sectors, was the most influential power block. The new ruling group demands a government increasingly based on repression and exclusive elitism, as the surest way to impose a new pattern of profit accumulation.

Question: How has this influenced the peace process in Colombia?

Answer: In 1991, negotiations took place between the guerrillas and the government. From July to November continuous talks occurred in Caracas, Venezuela between delegates of the Guerrilla Coordination (formed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces, National Liberation Army and the Popular Liberation Army [EPL]) and high government representatives. Although no concrete agreements were reached, the talks advanced the process and dealt with the problems presented by the guerrillas. Participants agreed on continuing the dialogue and an agenda was set.

In Tlaxcala, Mexico in 1992, the formal talks

broke down and the government left the negotiations, using as an excuse the killing of a long-time conservative leader by an EPL group. The situation continued to deteriorate after the negotiating delegations returned to the country.

The highest point of tension in the country was reached with the declaration in November, 1992 of the so-called "interior commotion" by the government – a state of judicial abnormality that has been used to limit rights and guarantees, to discriminate against the labor movement, cooperatives, peasants' organizations and, above all, to persecute the left movement, especially the Patriotic Union and the Communist Party. In fact the Attorney General has initiated judicial proceedings against some of the leaders of the Union and the Communist Party. The legal status of the Party has been suspended through official pressure. A "dirty war" has taken new victims with assassination attempts and massacres in the states of Antioquia, Valle, Meta, Santander, etc. Leaders of the Communist Party are being detained in Medellín and other cities, and the number of missing members of revolutionary parties is increasing while the authorities look by complacently.

An unprecedented situation is now taking place. The president and his closest advisers have declared a so-called "total war" or "integral confrontation" with the guerrillas. According to this new concept of total war, which has no basis in the Constitution or law, the system wages armed struggle against guerrilla groups while simultaneously implementing a war economy (to justify the real misery). They also intend to proceed against guerrilla "collaborators," including all with a left or progressive position, and to offer huge amounts of money for information on guerrilla leaders.

As a result of this policy there is an increase in new war taxes and the sale of special bonds. There is a sharp increase in military force, especially the use of "voluntary soldiers" – mercenaries generally paid to persecute the guerrillas. There is also an intensification of air force attacks, the formation of new military units, the acquisition of sophisticated military equipment and a giant investment in the intelligence services to pay for spies everywhere.

Question: Are the possibilities for government negotiations with the guerrillas very remote?

Answer: The atmosphere brought about with this "total war" benefits, of course, big business, mil-

itary commanders, rich land owners, and the corrupt speculators. The government's selective terrorism has put a lock on the freedom of expression of democratic forces and the social movement, as well as the left. In practice, there is censorship of the press, radio and TV on everything related to popular struggle, military actions and independent positions. Currently in Colombia, to express ideas of a political, instead of military, solution to the armed conflict, to present the idea of dialogue and negotiating proposals, is little less than illegal. Everything is under a curtain of silence.

But the system's staunch position against negotiations is backfiring. It has left the banner of peace – the only alternative – in the hands of the left, the labor and social movements and some realistic sections of the bourgeoisie. With a new period beginning now and presidential elections coming in 1994, this flag will surely be the mobilizer of progressive candidacies and electoral alliances of those who favor social and political change. A whole movement is starting to surge with this goal as its main theme.

In its Extraordinary Congress in 1991, the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) placed the struggle for a political solution to the armed conflict at the center of its actions. The Party presented to the nation concrete negotiating proposals which seriously influenced the talks in Caracas and Tlaxcala. At the same time, the Communists have tried to explain the origin of the armed clashes not only by the decomposition of traditional society and its social motives, but also by the political environment in which this long crisis has been maturing, which has given it a different and specific character compared to other countries on the continent.

The Colombian ruling class has gotten accustomed to violence, not only as an instrument of domination of last resort but also as a daily means of forcing the submission of the people – violence-as a way of governing. We have only to remember that the country has practically lived under a "state of siege" since 1948, beating a world record of legal abnormality. With this practice the oligarchy managed to dislocate the important mass movement which came into being after World War II. By combining violence with slyness it found the way to weaken and divide the popular movement, using the deep influence of traditional bipartisanship.

However, also among the ruling class there have blossomed elements of realism and culture which play a role in the contradictions within the

oligarchy. As against the thesis of military defeat and surrender of the guerrillas, of their freely disarming without any concessions from the power elite, there is now coming from the top the conviction that the way out of the crisis must be negotiated – bearing in mind the present level of the war, the real power that the guerrilla movement has acquired at local and regional levels, its influence in the political process and the fairness and extent of many of its demands. In the near future this focus will gain strength not only in the people's camp but also among important sections of intellectuals and prominent figures of the power structure. The experience of negotiations in El Salvador contributes to this process. And yet warmongering officials responsible for decision making have dedicated all their time to showing the differences between the Salvadoran and Colombian situations.

The more realistic elements concur on the need to listen to the demands of the guerrilla movement and to create the kind of climate in which negotiation is acceptable. It must be understood that the democratic co-existence of Colombians is going to depend on a spirit of compromise not only from the guerrillas, as is expected now, but also from those in power.

Question: What effect has drug trafficking had on the situation?

Answer: The close alliance of former president Barco with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) during the previous government unleashed a complex confrontation between the Medellín Cartel and military and police institutions. The clash led to a high degree of violence. The situation changed after Barco left office. The new Constitution (1991) expressly prohibited the extradition of Colombian nationals and favored the new process of "submitting to justice" by drug dealing groups, whose members were assured easy trials in return for the acknowledgement of their crimes.

An important section of ranking members of the Cartel gave in, among them the head of the organization, Pablo Escobar. For more than a year he and his closest collaborators were confined to jail. But pressure from the DEA and other sectors that demanded harsher treatment for drug groups pushed the government to take harsher measures against those jailed. Escobar and his companions didn't want to be forcefully taken out of prison, alleging their lives were at risk. They escaped to

their support base and friends.

This experience is linked to the change in government. It is evident that the mechanism of "submission to justice" was a more realistic way of reducing the violent aspects of narcotics trafficking. But the insistence on more severe and authoritarian treatment, instead of helping the process, has sparked even more rigorously the fires of violence. The situation has regressed to even more tragic conditions than during "Barco's war." All the structures that have been so carefully built and that had produced meaningful success crumbled and gave way to the old patterns of mutual retaliation.

In an atmosphere in which officers and government officials take advantage of repression to profit themselves, and where the anti-drug war is an important part of the mechanism of corruption, official accusations of collusion of guerrillas and narcotics dealers have been unlimited. And yet it has been acknowledged that the assassinations of leftist leaders have been perpetrated by means of an agreement between narcotics gangsters and the military.

The Colombian left and the guerrilla movement have proposed plans for the eradication of coca, poppy and marijuana plantations, to be substituted by other productive crops with substantial government aid of land, seeds, tools, etc. The government has until now turned a deaf ear to this proposal. It prefers, with rather obvious hypocrisy, to appear as the great predator of lands where coca is being grown, razing flora and fauna of vast regions, increasing the misery and disease of peasants and indigenous peoples whose only means of survival depends on those crops. This is what is behind the supposed "association" of guerrilla and drug traffickers.

Question: What influence have developments in the socialist world had?

Answer: Of course, the crisis of socialism, the collapse of the socialist camp, the disintegration of the USSR and the confusion and sense of disorientation brought about by these facts have had vast repercussions on world and national relations. It is a grave problem for the Colombian revolutionary movement.

The weakening of the left, the loss of influence of those who are for socialism and the setback to the workers' movement are the more immediate results of this debacle – which is comparable only with the crisis of the revolutionary movement during World

War I when most Social Democratic parties joined the capitalist governments.

This has translated into the loss of important workers' gains. Without the atmosphere created by this situation, it wouldn't have been possible for capitalist bosses to mount their aggressive offensive which has resulted in labor concessions, the liquidation of mass organizations and the weakening of the labor movement. The truth is that many on the left have stopped their activities.

The Communist Party and Patriotic Union are being discriminated against and persecuted. The establishment promotes through its publicists, professors, and theoreticians – united with renegades – the idea that Communists don't have a reason to exist since Marxism has been defeated and that there are not Communist parties in other countries. President Gaviria has used the term "dinosaurs" to refer to revolutionary fighters, arguing that we represent an extinguished period of history.

At the 15th Party Congress in 1988, the PCC made a positive although somewhat discrete assessment of the perestroika experience. The evaluation of events that brought about the collapse of many of the countries of real socialism has caused desertions, confrontations between tendencies and a mood of general dispersion and confusion.

Contradictory theses were presented in the 16th Extraordinary Congress in 1991. But in this, our last Congress, the Communist collective tried to review the experience and to overcome the one-sided focus on it. There were important changes related to our program; one that was adopted was entitled, "For Advanced Democracy and Human Socialism." Rectifications were made on the type of revolutionary party needed for the country. A new assessment of the international situation was made under the conditions of the apparent general triumph of capitalism and the much-promoted growth of a unipolar world. An aspect that was worked on at the Congress was the urgency of advancing towards elaborating of our own Latin American thinking and behavior in order to overcome the ideological dependency on the Soviet system, the type of bureaucratic regimes that were created in that system.

In this regard we have participated in the South America Communist conferences, in the seminar of the Communist parties held in Quito, Ecuador, and in the meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum (meeting of left parties of Latin America). At the same time, we have built our relations with parties which are not

Marxist, including those close to Social Democracy.

But the line we have followed is not that of rejecting Marxism, nor the abandonment of socialist ideals. These ideals are not subject to the crisis or the circumstantial defeat of revolutionary movements and governments. The mass workers' movement, its goal of liberation and its aspirations to take power have not disappeared, nor will they disappear. Capitalism, despite the many triumphs it achieved in a specific period of time, is not in any condition to solve the deep problems of the masses and social injustice and brutal exploitation. By its own nature it is and will be an elitist and unequal society, within which some partial benefits can be achieved but not enough to satisfy the desire for liberation and self-government that animate the workers and people.

In one way or another, by assimilating the experience of its wrong practices and overcoming the crisis of the experiment of socialism defeated in Europe, the peoples will find the way to go beyond the capitalist system and create a society and a state more just and more capable of solving the problems of the have nots.

Question: How can greater world Communist unity be achieved?

Answer: The Colombian Communist Party is trying to strengthen its links with Communist and workers' parties, progressive forces and all who are pursuing a new road toward social and political renovation, against neo-liberalism and capitalist arrogance.

We haven't discussed the convenience of holding an international meeting of Communist parties. In practice we have to rebuild weakened ties and former relations of friendship among revolutionaries. But it seems difficult at this moment to think of a conference or general meeting of the parties which reclaim Communist loyalties. What is more immediate and feasible seems to be keeping ties at regional levels. Also feasible is cooperation with workers' parties, and those with different structures and ideological orientations, in concrete campaigns. For example, the forums that have been held in Latin America in this period indicate that the defense of interests threatened by neo-liberalism, the search for common positions between trade unions, solidarity with Cuba, taking positions to confront the European Economic Community and the United States, supporting agreements in El Salvador, etc., should be the primary motives for seeking unified mobi-

lization and direction.

Needless to say, support and solidarity with Cuba is one of the most important factors in building a united movement and is an important element in bringing progressive forces closer together. It is stimulating to see the way in which wide sections of the population have responded to demands for a new attitude toward Cuba, given the terrible difficulties faced by that island country - which is emerging as an example of dignity, fighting spirit and hope for a socialist future for the continent.

This has somehow to influence the Colombian government's attitude toward Cuba. Colombia made a positive contribution at the recent UN General Assembly vote against the Torricelli bill. Now that the Colombian delegation is to preside at the Group of 77, the relatively independent positions that it takes in this respect will have crucial meaning.

Question: What can be done to build international solidarity?

Answer: The constant deterioration of the situation in Colombia urges support and understanding from U.S. progressive opinion. One of the more general demands in the debate to restart the peace talks is the need for international mediation. This will only be won with the pressure of public opinion from Latin America and North America. This will require the spreading of a great deal of information about the situation in Colombia: the climate of violence caused by the official declaration of total war; the continuation of the dirty war against popular leaders; the charges of continuous violations of human rights; and the oppressive denial of constitutional guarantees and freedoms.

The number of political prisoners in Colombia increases incessantly. The intimidating atmosphere created by informers, the imposition by the national and international media of silence along with partial and distorted information, the frame up of left leaders - all of this must be denounced before world public opinion to undo the false image of "democracy and progress" that the government is presenting to the peoples of Europe and the United States.

It is a duty of political truth and honesty to show the real face of a system that for the first time dares to declare publicly that its goal is war and violence against the people of its own country. □

Art and Social Contradiction

Norman W. Goldberg

The war of words in the electronic and print media over Spike Lee's recent film *Malcolm X* illustrates the interplay between art and politics, and for Marxist-Leninist aesthetics it presents a set of questions long deliberated but never fully settled. A war of words has centered on the depiction of Malcolm X in the film.

His gifts as a leader and orator and his courage inspire many to his cause. When he feels betrayed by what he perceives as hypocrisy in the Nation of Islam's leadership, he withdraws and attempts to start an independent organization. Seen as a threat to the Muslim leadership, he is assassinated with the connivance of the CIA.

Those who praise the film stress Lee's directorial talent, his vivid re-creation of recent Black history, and point to the superb acting, especially Denzel Washington's portrayal of Malcolm. The film is acclaimed by its supporters as an outstanding achievement, that mirrors life for African Americans in a racist society, not a sop for middle class Blacks.

Some critics of the film have strongly defended the hero-image of Malcolm against what they see as a slick Hollywoodized presentation, replete with standard film fare: violence, crime and sex, all served up to whet the appetites of a mass audience and assure commercial success. These critics see Spike Lee as a talented artist who has been used by Hollywood to make a film acceptable to whites.

Other criticisms are voiced, such as the assertion that the film has no working-class substance, and that the changes in Malcolm's views from Black nationalism to a deeper social consciousness are not shown. There have been criticisms by feminists, Black intellectuals, establishment moderates, and also from Black trade unionists. The kettle boils and opinions are intense. It is a vexing question and it defies simplistic analysis. We are living in a racist society and we see on film a flawed fight for liberation. It is therefore fully understandable why many African Americans, living in persecution, lionize the martyred Malcolm. The complexities of the film

reflect the complexities that exist in bourgeois society and in the movement against racism.

This is fundamentally a political question, and calls for examination from a Marxist perspective. The film's proximity to political reality cannot be sidestepped by a critical appraisal based solely on its artistic production, direction and performance. Malcolm X was a complex and charismatic figure who underwent an evolution in views, first as a leader of the Nation of Islam and later as the head of the Organization of Afro-American Unity and Muslim Mosques, Inc. He initially promoted nationalism and separatism but later, while retaining a nationalist perspective, argued for greater cooperation and unity between peoples.

Political reality made it indispensable that alliances be made with the trade unions and a wide range of organizations to advance the fight for racial justice. This was more clearly understood and practiced by Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Malcolm criticized King and other African American leaders for not fighting hard enough but later came to realize he was wrong. King was a unifier who spearheaded a mass movement against racism and segregation and pushed it as far as it could go at the time. The class character of this movement was crystallizing, and that is why Martin Luther King, Jr. was also assassinated. The working-class element in the movement headed by King was lacking in Malcolm.

Nevertheless, Malcolm's dedication to the struggle and his refusal to compromise remains a powerful element in African American consciousness, despite his ideological shortcomings. The continuing racism, including unemployment, poverty, health problems, homelessness and general misery for millions keeps the image of Malcolm X alive.

The purpose here is not to write a full review of *Malcolm X*, but to deal with the larger question of art as evocative of social reality, and how the contradictions in social reality affect art. This is an old question for Marxist aesthetics, a topic of controversy for decades. Marxism has made many contributions in art criticism and theory, though not unfortunately in recent years.

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BRECHT-LUKACS DEBATES ■ In the 1930s and '40s, Bertolt Brecht and George Lukacs took part in an ongoing debate on literature and theater that directly bears on these issues. Both were Communists, yet they had sharply opposing views on art and its function in society.¹ Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was a German poet and dramatist, and a fiercely anti-capitalist writer. Contained in Brecht's work such as *Drums in the Night*, *In the Jungle of the Cities*, *Three Penny Opera*, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany*, *Galileo*, and *Mother Courage*, is an unrelenting denunciation of modern bourgeois society, which is the kernel of his poems and plays. Brecht left Germany when fascism came to power, and lived in various places in Europe and the USA. After the war he returned to Europe and lived in the GDR (East Germany) where a theater was organized for him in which his plays were constantly performed. After his death the theater's direction was assumed by his wife, the actress Helene Weigel.

George Lukacs (1885-1971) was a Hungarian philosopher and literary historian. He has been called by some "The Marx of Aesthetics." Lukacs' critical works include *Theory of the Novel*, *History and Class Consciousness*, *Goethe and his Age*, *Essays on Realism*, *The Historical Novel*, *Essays on Thomas Mann* and other studies. Lukacs was a Marxist traditionalist, that is he was an adherent of realism in its classic form, and was suspicious of modernism in the arts. Modernism he felt to be a petty bourgeois tool and device of obfuscation. Art and aesthetics in his view should be evolutionary and derived from long cultural experience.

Lukacs was a member of the Hungarian Communist Party and was forced to flee Hungary after the Horthy fascist regime came to power in the early 1920s. He was active in the Communist Party of Germany in the pre-Hitler period. For a while he lived and worked in the Soviet Union and after the war returned to Hungary. In 1956, a politically disoriented Lukacs accepted the post of Minister of Culture in the short-lived Imre Nagy social democratic regime during the counter-revolution. After its defeat, Lukacs lived out the rest of his life in semi-retirement in Budapest.

Both Brecht and Lukas were influenced by the new revolutionary art that arose in the Soviet Union after the 1917 revolution and spread to other countries. This art gained a firm foothold in Germany which had been shaken to its foundations by its World War I defeat and worker insurrections. All

art in Germany was affected by the revolutionary waves.

The most prominent figure of this new art was Vsevolod Emilievich Meyerhold, the Soviet director who staged many political propaganda plays, and who introduced such innovations as dispensing with the theatrical curtain and the use of a bare stage and only symbolic scenery. In Germany, Meyerhold's most talented disciples were Bertolt Brecht, Erwin Piscator, Willi Bredel and Ernst Ottwald, all Communist writers and dramatists.

Piscator and Bredel were advocates of a purely political and agitational theater, a theater of revolutionary working-class action. In Piscator's view, the individual no longer exists except as an extension of his class and motivated by its will. Piscator writes: "Man as shown on the stage is of importance to us because of his social function only. When he appears on the stage, his class and rank appear with him." Piscator goes on to say that with every moral, spiritual or personal conflict, man enters into conflict with society. All relations, personal and otherwise, are social relations and are political at the core. Only political theater, literature and art are capable of meeting the challenge. All other art is mystifying and mesmerizing, escapist, and a barrier to heightened consciousness and action.

This outlook troubled a number of Communist Party theoreticians, even in a highly charged class conscious Germany. In the late 1920s, the Communist Party newspaper, *Red Flag*, criticized Piscator's approach to theater, writing:

This is not art but propaganda. The aim here is to express on the stage the proletarian and Communist idea for propagandistic and educational purposes only. There is not supposed to be any aesthetic pleasure. Art is too sacred a thing for its name to be applied to vulgar propaganda. What the worker needs in our day is a vigorous art. It matters little if this art is of bourgeois origin, so long as it is art.

More was said on this in other Party publications which pointed out that Lenin and Lunacharsky, the Soviet Union's first Commissar of Education, had both recoiled from the extremes of Bogdanov's "Proletkult," a theatrical group whose aim was the accentuation of class struggle. Bogdanov had said, "Art, properly speaking, is of no concern. The aim is to engage in politics."²

Again, questions arise: Do aesthetics transcend political art? What are the class characteristics of

aesthetics? Can the artistic properties of political or propagandistic art elevate it to greatness? These questions teem with problems that echo the uneven nature of political reality and the class struggle. This unevenness leads to contradictions in artistic expression and mass aesthetic response. Something of this problem can be seen in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*.

Bertolt Brecht in this regard preserved the revolutionary fervor of his theater as did the others, but he had an advantage over those dramatists who created "hard edged" political art. Brecht was not only a theoretician, a polemicist and a political activist, but was also acutely probing and experimental in a partisan, class way. In Brecht there is a dialectical interaction between social reality and imaginary interpretation – it is theater which prevents polemics from becoming too severe on the one hand, and too pensive and abstract on the other. Brecht gives us a didactic form of theater, a theater of instruction held in rein by artistic ingenuity. It is high political entertainment, a successful marriage of art and politics, an art that is jarring, challenging, even troublesome. Yet it is entertaining. Who would dare classify *Mother Courage*, *Galileo*, *Baal*, or *Captain MacHeath* as mere mouthpieces of class drama?

THEATER OF ILLUSION ■ Brecht developed a revolutionary new form of drama. His purpose was to smash the theater of tradition, which he called the theater of illusion, and to force the spectator to think. The basic character of traditional theater is to reproduce the life we know on the stage. We look into a room (on stage) with three walls. The fourth wall has been opened for us to look into. No device which may shatter the illusion, such as directly addressing or involving the audience, is permitted. Sets, lighting, narrative and acting are all designed to maintain the illusion. This is the underlying character of late 19th Century drama, the theater of Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov.

Generally, this theater is held in three acts, a triad which is the ideal form of dramatic construction. Act I presents the particulars and suggests the forthcoming conflict; Act II brings the conflict to a critical head; and Act III brings the resolution, the catharsis.

Brecht opposed this form of theater, calling it artificial, hypnotic and restrictive. He likened it to church, where one goes every week to atone for one's sins and then is relieved (catharsis), so as to go on sinning until next week – sin and catharsis, repeated again and again, with nothing learned and

no advance. This to Brecht was the sin of illusionist theater.³

Since part of the illusion is derived from a darkened theater, Brecht kept the auditorium lit. In this way he felt the audience would remain fully conscious, intellectually alert and better able to judge what goes on the stage, rather than remaining passive. The audience is not there to be entertained but to think and judge. He introduced a number of anti-illusionist theatrical novelties that would make the audience always aware that they were in a theater. A night scene for example might be accomplished by simply hanging up an artificial moon to indicate night.

Paradoxically, what comes across in Brecht is precisely entertainment, although not of the traditional sort. Audiences reflect their history and the particulars of their class culture. German audiences, including workers, have responded to the nuances in Brechtian theater more than their counterparts in other countries. The German experience – its failed bourgeois revolution, military defeats and severe worker uprisings – created an audience acutely sensitive to Brechtian irony, satire and social fantasy, a quality less in evidence elsewhere.

Brecht was not alone in puncturing the theater of illusion. Non-illusionist theater is seen in Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, the moving plays of Lorraine Hansberry and the dramas of Melvin Van Peebles.

In cinema, the film of illusion was shattered by Sergei Eisenstein, V.I. Pudovkin, G.W. Pabst, Fritz Lang, Orson Welles and Spike Lee. This anti-illusionist trend represents a revolutionary breakthrough in artistic form (not always in content), and creates for the audience the challenge of understanding the new techniques.

George Lukacs criticized Brecht's aesthetic views as well as Brechtian theater. Lukacs considered the puncturing of theatrical illusion and its "magic" as an arbitrary intrusion into the process of how art entrances and involves. Lukacs went to great lengths to show how Henrik Ibsen's plays were more socially effective for their time than all of Brecht's plays. Ibsen's plays like *An Enemy of the People*, *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, became lightning rods, he argued, not only for theatre-goers but for thousands of people in political movements against government hypocrisy, corruption and inequality for women. According to Lukacs, Brecht

was playing with petty bourgeois journalistic techniques and circus novelties that separate the social meaning of stage drama from how people observe, feel and really learn.⁴

The real confrontation between Brecht and Lukacs took place in 1938 during a debate on expressionism, an art movement which had taken root in various quarters. Expressionism in art claimed to convey inner emotion and subjective experience rather than objective reality, even though much of it had qualities of social awareness. Brecht, whose early works had expressionist qualities, supported this trend, while Lukacs felt expressionism to be an intrusion into critical and social realist literature and art, a distorted form of artistic dissidence, the by-product of the petty bourgeoisie, not the working class.

DEBATE ON SOCIALIST REALISM ■ Although Brecht and Lukacs were eager to fight fascism, the differences between them sharpened. There were basic differences between them on the socialist realism of Soviet art. To Lukacs, socialist realism is the logical extension of the critical and social realism found in literature and art of the 19th Century. Socialist realism is the inheritor of the great realist literature and art of the past, whose vision and structure would serve the new working-class order. Brecht, however, is convinced that only a radical break with the decadent bourgeoisie and its art will enable the people, led by the working class, to win the battle against fascism. He sees socialist realism as suffocating to art, an overlay of old and tired forms on a new revolutionary content. Lukacs' general literary criticism, insofar as it appears to be of aesthetic contemplation only, is suspect to Brecht. As he puts it:

It is the evidence of capitulation, of retreat from the fray. The utopian and idealistic element that one finds in Lukacs' essays makes his works unsatisfactory, despite the great number of interesting things in them. In Lukacs, the only thing that matters is enjoyment, not the struggle or the way out, no advance.

Lukacs, while respecting Brecht's special talent, felt ever more strongly the theater of anti-illusion to be a failure. In his opinion, the long-evolved realist aesthetic cannot be so easily interrupted and discarded. A new aesthetic cannot be born so precipitously, leaning on schematics and innovation of a sort that violates cultural heritage. Lukacs insisted that the spectator's interest in a performance should

not be dependent on gimmickry laid over the theme like a varnish. Art, in his view, should be rooted within the theme itself and should flower naturally from dramatic tensions. Drama can move, shock and surprise by stressing the explosive problems inherent in the social questions being dealt with by means of concentration, not interruption.

Directly opposing Brecht, Lukacs referred to Chekhovian theater and its power. Chekhov dramatizes the impasse and the conflict between the desires and intentions of the characters on stage and the social contradictions that make it impossible for them to be realized. Brecht, by way of contrast, devised a theater of alienation, by which he meant theater that alienates (separates) the audience from emotional entrapment, and compels them to think. Commenting on this, Lukacs writes: "All of theater is based on one and the same alienation effect, but precisely for that reason what we witness is drama and not a simple alienation effect."

Here, Lukacs means alienation to be a social condition characteristic of capitalist society, the separation of people from their work and from each other, and its existence as a leading factor in the content of art, literature and drama. We would find the root causes of alienation in the writings of Marx. In other words, Lukacs believes that alienation in its social presentation on stage does not need alienated theatrical contrivances to enhance the dramatic situation.⁵

There are several ideological influences in art, and as many schools of content, but realism has proven to be the most meaningful and penetrating. This is because realism is the creative reproduction of outer reality, the world of life and movement, and is the art that attracts most people.

The term realism is usually interpreted in a technical and narrow sense. In the visual arts it usually means the duplication of something, or a likeness of reality, painted by an artist. Sometimes realism is thought of as a rendering. In this sense Gilbert Stuart, who painted portraits of George Washington and other prominent figures of his time, could be called a realist. So could Norman Rockwell, who painted many commercial illustrations. However, neither were realists, and this is only one example of the confusion of terminology.

Realism is not a technique. Fundamentally, it is a philosophy that sees a class-divided world and a social reality that is working-class oriented. Realism in art is attractive when it intensifies the viewer's sense of social truth by its artistic recreation. The

"non-realistic" fantasy dramas of Bertolt Brecht attract us because the audience sees a mocking vision of class oppression in semi-abstract form, but a vision that is supremely realist in substance. This makes Brecht a realist artist in the true sense. By the same token, the films of Spike Lee are moving in a similar direction.

Realism goes beyond simple duplication of life to reveal the underlying truth shaping the character of whatever it is concerned with. A look at two dramatists, Edward Albee and Lillian Hellman, reveals this process. In Albee's play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* we see a marriage in crisis. A college professor, bored with his life and who has failed to climb the ladder to success in the academic world, takes out his frustrations on his wife by ridiculing and tormenting her, as well as ridiculing everything else around him. His wife, who is also bored and frustrated, uses her husband as a scapegoat. The fierce interaction between them, and their use of another couple as vehicles to hurt each other, produces a dramatic tension on the stage. It is startling and looks real. We are reminded that marriage can indeed be a tortured form of relationship in modern life. But why?

Albee is interested in effects, not in causes. We are given only a glimpse of the suffocating atmosphere of academic life in the university. Why doesn't the professor try to succeed at the university? What is meant by success? The professor cannot see beyond the scope of his profession, and his wife cannot see beyond the human failures of her husband. It is the theater of lost souls. This is not realism, but a psychological exploration of tragedy in personal terms only. In *Virginia Woolf*, we see and hear much but learn very little.⁶

In Lillian Hellman's two related plays, *Another Part of the Forest* and *The Little Foxes*, we also see families in crisis. However, here each of the characters are being shaped by circumstances external to themselves. In these plays, the post-Civil War South is being penetrated by Northern capitalism, and money rules everything. The desires, dreams, needs and illusions are all dependent on money. Human relationships are reduced to money relationships, and we see the new society being born in the ashes of slavery and chivalry.⁷

Again, it should be repeated that realism is a way of perceiving, a philosophy, not a style of reproduction or representation. Unreal-like methods or forms can be used to reveal truths to us in art. We have learned to understand fairy tales, fables and

fantasies. We recognize symbols. We have learned to interpret allegories, metaphors, legends and myths. As artistic devices they are not real. But they are valid for art if their meaning is real.

Here is another example. Over 300 years ago in Spain, Cervantes wrote his epic, *Don Quixote De La Mancha*, the story of an ageing aristocrat who goes out to right the wrongs of the world, accompanied by a simple servant, Sancho Panza. The novel is a fantasy in its form. The Don meets all classes of people, visits all sort of places. He espouses the values of the old morality, justice and honor, which appear to find no place in a world of immorality, injustice and dishonor as represented in fantastic places and things. He battles against evil in the form of windmills but cannot win. His dreams are utopian, old dreams which cannot be realized in conditions of a changing Spain whose landed nobility was being replaced by the new class of mercantile capitalist aristocrats. In this fantasy, Cervantes showed that it was impossible to return to the "virtues" of feudalism. The Don was dreaming an "impossible dream."

To Don Quixote, the windmill was a symbol of evil. To capitalism at the time, it was a power source for production. Cervantes shows us the pain that comes with progress at a definite stage in history. The simple servant, Sancho Panza, may be seen as a symbol of the common people. As an oppressed and exploited people under feudalism and capitalism, their interests were attached to neither system. They are outsiders. From the mouth of Sancho Panza come detached, humorous and foolish remarks, as if he is an uninvolved commentator on the adventures going on. This adds to the realism of a novel whose literary form is unreal.

Realism has appeared in the history of art in many categories: as fantasy, symbolist, moralist, satire, historic realism, humanism, critical realism, social realism and as socialist realism. The categories and the forms change, as each is a means of conveying some aspect of social truth.

ART AND CONTRADICTION □ Marxism rejects formalism which reduces art to its surface relationships – that is to say, its style, structure and devices – and consigns art to contemplation, pleasure and remote aestheticism. At the same time, it is recognized that these ingredients fill a need for many of us. It is another living contradiction. Marxist aesthetics is fundamentally social, but it is not vulgar sociology. It disallows a flag-waving art that offers the lazy mind a handy, prefabricated system of interpreta-

tion and enjoyment. Simply put, Marxist aesthetics is neither narrow sociology nor elevated refinement. At its best, Marxism brings together all the comprehensive elements within art to creatively probe and portray social life with its movements and contradictions.

Contradiction is an elementary characteristic of life, and a built-in factor in art. One of Lukacs' contributions to literary criticism was to show that great novels came from authors whose social views were in contradiction to what they wrote. Balzac, who Lukacs acclaims as the most prominent writer of the 19th Century, is an example. Balzac was a royalist in outlook, and he hated the money-grubbing new bourgeoisie of post-revolutionary France. He harkened back to the old days of the aristocracy with its supposed high principles, ethics and morality. But his thoroughness, keen observation and, above all, scrupulous honesty in writing about French society in the post-revolutionary era, produced over 100 novels that were not only condemnations of bourgeois France but also of the decadence of the past aristocracy. It was a refutation of his own leanings, a contradiction, and this antithetical element enriched his work with a vibrant realism.⁸

Yet Brecht, in his revolutionary fervor, dismissed Balzac as a writer of potboilers. As Lukacs analyzed the power and contradiction of writers like Stendahl, Tolstoy and Thomas Mann, Brecht criticized them as mystifiers and self-inflated pontificators.

This and other controversies are still with us, and they include all the big questions in art: content and form, politics and aesthetics, the meaning of realism, art and freedom, and of course, dialectics and contradiction.

CENSORSHIP AND ARTISTIC 'FREEDOM' ■ Contemporary controversies over the issue of artistic freedom reflect another dimension of these problems. Artistic freedom is a *cause celebre* today in view of attempts at censorship and suppression. Rock groups, stand-up comics and painters have had engagements and exhibits canceled, being accused of promoting drugs, indiscriminate sex, violence, indecency, suicide and general nihilistic lifestyles in their work. The recent storm over the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe and the startling art of Andres Serrano resulted in the cancellation of their exhibits and threats of funding cuts against supportive museums and galleries by the National Endow-

ment for the Arts. In another case a few years ago, a performance by the actress Vanessa Redgrave with the Boston Symphony Orchestra was stopped by Zionist pressure groups because she was a supporter of the Palestinian cause. This is all a by-product of the Reagan-Bush years which fostered a right-wing spread of Babbit-like ignorance and hatred.

Other forms of political censorship, suppression and artistic destruction go back to the days when Nelson Rockefeller canceled the completion of a mural by Diego Rivera in the newly built Radio City because there was a portrait of Lenin in it. There were attempts to remove a mural at the main post office in San Francisco because its creator, Anton Refreiger, was known for his left-wing views. When the Zeckendorf apartment complex was built at Union Square in New York City, the old building housing the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union was demolished and with it a mural by Hugo Gellert honoring the workers. Gellert's mural was expendable to the real estate sharks, and art was sacrificed on the altar of private profit.

Censorship and the suppression of artistic freedom are bruising issues, but the way they are dealt with shows a limited degree of social perception by many. The Mapplethorpe controversy is a case in point. The argument between his defenders and opponents is confined to restrictive aesthetics, devoid of a social context. His defenders praise his photographs as being provocative evocations of the human figure, with emphasis on sexuality and homosexuality. It is seen by many as the "humanization" of voyeurist aesthetics. The opponents, led by art critic Hilton Kramer, see in Mapplethorpe's work an intrusion of pretentious eroticism into the domain of "high art." Kramer argues that true art, or "high art" as he calls it, possesses the attributes of "universal beauty," which can be achieved only by transcending the mundane and the ephemeral. In other words, true art must be free of momentary concerns and social commentary which Kramer long ago labeled propaganda.

Both disputes reveal a superficial understanding of what freedom really is. When Kramer lumps eroticism and social commentary together as inimical to art, he creates a dangerous smokescreen of confusion, making it obligatory to side with Mapplethorpe's supporters, because objectively Kramer becomes the art critic for Jesse Helms.

The sad fact is that for almost four decades the main spokespersons for artistic questions have been representatives of the liberal (and anti-Communist)

intelligentsia, avant-gardists and some leftists claiming to be Marxists. Marxism-Leninism as a voice in culture and art has itself been largely censored from American life for more than forty years. Two generations of creative and performing artists have been prevented from even an acquaintance with Marxist-Leninist theories of art and freedom. How else to account for the shallowness of views on this major question today?

Basically, there are two interpretations of the general meaning of freedom. The first interpretation and the prevalent one, especially in art, sees freedom as the absence of restraint. The arts, more than any other human activity, are sensitive to the concept of restraint. This concept, the absence of restraint, can be traced back to the 18th Century and the rise of the bourgeoisie. To overcome the feudal system, the new men of business had to free themselves of taxes, duties, levies and other burdens put on them by the king, the aristocracy and the church, which amounted to restraint on trade, the denial of freedom to conduct commerce. This was the credo of the laissez-faire economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo and social philosophers like Mills, Rousseau, Voltaire and Jefferson.

Some artists have idolized the view of freedom as the absence of restraint. Full freedom for the individual had a glorious ring to it but is in essence an abstract notion of freedom that has been idealized to rationalize rampant individualism and excess. It is the principle of bourgeois freedom.

MARXIST-LENINIST VIEW OF FREEDOM ■ The second interpretation of freedom is the Marxist one, expressed at great length by Engels. This view sees freedom as operating within a class framework, and having true meaning when it expresses the will and the interests of the oppressed, the working class. In Engels we read that freedom is the recognition of necessity. He means that under exploitative class conditions, the individual (worker) takes the road to freedom by first understanding the fundamental oppressive nature of society, and then working to change it. In an off-the-cuff remark, Marx said, "Freedom is happiness achieved through struggle."

Marxism, in taking a working-class position, rejects all notions of pure freedom as utopian illusion. In every class-divided society, the freedom for some means the denial of freedom for others.

Freedom is realized through class struggle, and artistic freedom can be best realized when the artist works in that framework. On its own, artistic free-

dom is an illusion and ultimately a form of self-enslavement. Advanced class and political consciousness will see the question of censorship in a new light. Censorship is a means of ruling class control. But censorship may also be used against ruling class control. The denial of concert facilities for singers Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson and conductor Dean Dixon were examples of racist, ruling class censorship; however, the outrage against an insulting painting of the late Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, and its removal from an exhibition by a committee of protesting Black aldermen, was an example of censorship as a progressive act. So was the boycotting of American performing artists who went to South Africa.

In the current situation, choices are limited and tactics must be shaped accordingly. When Senator Jesse Helms and the right wing attack art for whatever reason, we must be on guard. This is thought control with fascist overtones. The danger is from the right wing, not Mapplethorpe.

Likewise, when Hilton Kramer attacks Mapplethorpe as a vulgarizer of art, we have to see Kramer not as a mere protagonist of elitism but as an enemy of humanism and social realism. Here is an old Cold War ideologue, a bitter anti-Communist who, in the ultimate sense, is in common cause with Helms, whether he knows it or not. A defeat of right-wing censorship would be a victory for artistic freedom, but it would not necessarily be a vindication of the artistic content of those singled out for attack.

Even as we defend the right of artists to work "freely and without restraint," there must be social responsibility. Much of contemporary art, including censored work, is pretentious, glib and narcissistic. Whatever pleasure it gives, it pales in significance when compared to art of social cognition and class-based human sensitivity.⁹

The Brecht-Lukacs debates strike some as an unnecessary exercise in polemics. It is seen as the posing of non-antagonistic contradictions that are resolved by human experience. In other words, art need not be frozen into one or another mold. There is validity to both classic art and its passive aesthetics as well as creative innovation that contains a significant message. We are all products of history and we take pleasure in the literature, music and art of the past. We are in good company. Marx and Engels loved the classics, from the Greeks to Goethe, Heine,

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POLITICAL AFFAIRS

A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story, by Elaine Brown, Pantheon, New York, 1992, \$25, 450 pp.

The Black Panther Movement has been the subject of much controversy and study. Now included amongst the discussion and discourse on the Black Panthers is a story untold and, until now, unconsidered. *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* presents the events of former Panther leader Elaine Brown's life. The book is a passionate and stirring account of what led to her dedication to and leadership of the Black Panther Party. This is a Black woman's story that concerns and considers her introduction to, involvement and relationship with the Black Panther Party. With this important volume, the reader becomes familiar with the Party's views and political agenda, and gains an insider's view on the tension and anxieties within the rank and file and leadership.

In understanding the significance of the Black Panther Party, it is important to explore the social and political moment that characterized the time, events and people. The Black Panther Party, borne out of the African American equality movement and the radicalism of the turbulent 1960s – with all its strengths and weaknesses – was very much a product of the times. The organization, founded by African American youth out of a need to organize around issues economically and politically affecting Black people in America, attempted to address them with what they considered to be a revolutionary platform. Brown's intimate autobiographical approach to this subject allows the reader to become acquainted with the truthfulness of her thought and the sensitivity of her emotions as she responds to the events that outline her life.

As one reads the pages of her book which is written in a conversant style, there is a sense of the author clearly wishing to be understood. She exposes the events of her life so as to become known by the reader. In this manner the reader can, perhaps, better understand and appreciate the story by coming to know the author. This approach places in perspective events that are painfully expressed in her account. Thus we come to know the dynamics of the Black Panther movement and her relationship to that movement by a familiarization with Elaine

Brown herself.

Prior to Brown's involvement with the African American freedom movement, she discusses the presence of an internal struggle which consumed her childhood and infringed upon her adult life. This dilemma took the form of the conflict between, on the one hand, the idea of living a stable, safe, and just life (with a longing to be white), and the disturbing reality of being a poor Black little girl in North Philadelphia. Aspiring for a life and status other than the one she lived, placed her in a state of psychological confusion in which many Black people in America find themselves: unhappy, unsatisfied, and painfully aware of their inequality. Under such circumstances it proved difficult for her to find peace with herself.

Upon relocating to Los Angeles from Philadelphia, Brown came in contact with a woman who was impressed with her music, who encouraged her to attend community and campus meetings. The Black Power movement was establishing itself at the time. Her sparse interest in issues concerning Black people became transformed. Brown's involvement increased, as she was introduced to the activities and movement initiated by the Black Panther Party. She was challenged to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Her introduction provoked interest, and her interest propelled involvement – the young musician became a member of the Black Panther Party.

From the organizing of food programs and an elementary school, to the violent confrontations with Ron Karenga's US organization and the police, Brown illustrates the activities of the Panthers. She recounts the magnitude of these events in detail, leaving in question the consequences these events would bear on the future of the Black Panthers, a question which is explored throughout the text and indirectly answered in the end.

Addressed in the autobiography are important issues such as how and why a faction occurred within the Panthers, and Eldridge Cleaver's initiating role in it. Brown also explores the damaging effects suffered as a result. She discusses what was going on at the very heart of the Panthers and provides an understanding of the relationship the leadership had with the rank and file, and the relationships

within the leadership itself.

Significantly, Brown points out that when the Panthers began establishing themselves within Black communities throughout the United States, the organization began to suffer attacks from the Cleaver faction (on the streets as well as from imprisoned Cleaver supporters), and from J. Edgar Hoover's violent and largely successful attempt to "neutralize" them. The very foundation of the movement was being attacked. As a result the Panthers had very little internal unity to defend themselves from external assaults. At the height of this crucial conflict, Huey P. Newton was exiled to Cuba. As a consequence, Elaine Brown was placed in charge of an organization that was literally deteriorating.

Operating out of a determination to save the Panthers, she worked to propel the organization in the direction originally intended: focusing on community involvement. The Panthers had accrued rich and valuable experience in this regard. Their elementary school, for example, had been recognized as the highest achieving grade school in the state. Similarly, the Panthers worked in a campaign that got the first Black mayor of Oakland elected.

Despite significant accomplishments during her leadership, she was often challenged with an issue that had presented problems within the rank and file since the Panthers had been organized: male supremacy. She was a woman subscribing to revolutionary and revolutionary practice, yet believed but rarely stated, was the notion that men were to be responsible for the revolution and its leadership. Women just were not be considered capable to lead.

Brown expresses her extreme disgust at this belief that had poisoned the Panthers for so long. She comes to understand that, in this respect, they had become enforcers of the same system they denounced - victims of an oppression that hadn't been completely put in perspective. The disruptiveness of this sexist internal element, in addition to other events occurring within the organization, was a weakness that rendered them fair prey to a bestial system that savagely consumed them.

In discussing the importance of Brown's discourse it is important to recognize that the growth of a Black woman is genuinely, passionately, and even desperately communicated. What she learns, confesses and experiences can serve to provide us with tools to analyze and work toward bettering the human condition. This affords us the ability to build on the strengths of past movements and over the

weakness that befell them. In this regard central to the Panther's weaknesses was a lack of ideological and political clarity that in the end proved fatal. Engaged in struggle on the basis of an ambiguous "revolutionary" platform, ideology was for them an afterthought. The resulting lack of direction created fertile soil for internal bickering and factionalism, ill-conceived confrontations with the state, and tactical confusion. Unfortunately and tragically, the Panthers didn't see the need for broader alliances and didn't see the working class. Not understanding this, sadly, they became entwined in a deadly web of internal strife and external attack, a web spun and manipulated by the FBI.

There is much in the work of the Panthers to be admired. Their bravery and determination is inspiring. To the extent that they involved themselves in working-class community issues - like the free breakfast program - they tapped into an invaluable reservoir of struggle. Today's inheritors of the Panther's tradition should draw the appropriate lessons.

Brown's autobiography is an important and illuminating book, although this reviewer could have been spared the extensive references to her intimate personal life. Her life experiences surmount knowledge gained, pain, and the ability to put into perspective the conflicting differences that have shaped her life, from her childhood in Philadelphia to her relationship with Huey Newton which invoked her love, understanding, confusion and rage. Only after having read the book can one come to understand the political and emotional extremes encountered by Brown in the course her involvement with the Black Panther Party. □

Dumeha Thompson

CONVERSATIONS: Straight Talk with America's Sister President, A Short Autobiography, by Johnetta B. Cole, Doubleday, New York, 1992, \$17.50, 183 pp.

In Dr. Johnetta B. Cole's new autobiography *CONVERSATIONS: Straight Talk with America's Sister President*, (The subtitle refers to Dr. Cole's presidency of Spelman College in Atlanta), she speaks as though the reader, or a group, were listening and asking questions. She counsels readers to develop their abilities and become educated, to join others and become activists so as to broaden the participation in the ongoing struggle for equality. Her autobiography also speaks of her empathy with Black men and tells how, when seeing her African American

brothers on soup lines, she realizes how unemployment and dead-end jobs have robbed them of their social and economic rights.

Cole's point of departure is as a Black woman living in a racist and sexist society. In her book the writer speaks of the struggle for human dignity and integrity and urges its resolution. Born into a fairly wealthy family in Jacksonville, Florida, she received from her parents a love of reading, music and art. At an early age she experienced insults by racial slurs, for the South was still dominated by racist "Southern gentlemen," who also regarded white women as pure, almost angelic. She understands that prejudice is not genetic but environmental, and believes in the possibility of building a just, harmonious and peaceful world free of racism. Yet that must be an assignment for today's youth and future generations.

When she looks back on her childhood, she remembers strong "messages" about the worth and abilities of her people. She quotes Jesse Jackson's famous chant, "I am somebody." None of the positive aspects of childhood, however, provided refuge from racism.

When she entered Fisk College she was introduced to the writings of W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay and was already familiar with the poems of James Weldon Johnson - who wrote the African American National Anthem and was also born in Jacksonville. Familiar with the world of African American culture, she knew Marian Anderson's arias and had daily contact with Arna Bontemps, writer and critic. Nevertheless she was dissatisfied with college life at Fisk where she found that most of the students were wealthy and had "endless discussions about money." She transferred to Oberlin where she was "part of a little band of Black folk in a white sea."

Here she had an opportunity to interact with people from China and various African countries. Her interest in anthropology was born in Oberlin where she learned about the famous anthropologist, Melville J. Herskovits. After completing her undergraduate work she studied with him at Northwestern University where she received her masters and doctorate.

She comments that Herskovits had a special interest in African American and women students. Herskovits, who wrote *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), mistakenly contends that Africans did not "prepare themselves" for the New World and that slavery denied them their culture. Her graduate studies also taught her that Gunnar Myrdal, the

Swedish economist, and Senator Daniel Moynihan presented "depraved and distorted African American culture and served to fan the flames of racial stereotypes."

After graduate school she carried on studies in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, St. Croix and Grenada. In 1982 she became a visiting professor of anthropology at Hunter College in New York. In 1986, after returning from leading a group of students to Brazil for a seminar where they explored with Catholic Brazilians the themes of slavery and the role of women, she was told by the president of Hunter, Donna Shalala, about the job possibility at Spelman.

Cole says racism is alive and doing well in America. Daily occurrences prove the fact. "The Klan marches again and has company: the Posse Committee, Aryan Nation and other hate groups that terrorize African Americans, other people of color and Jews. As painful as it is ... we still are not free." Cole points out that the psychological effect of racism can never be erased and asks that white people nip in the bud any racial epithet or behavior not only against Blacks but all human beings.

In the last part of her book, Dr. Cole continues her discussion on sexism, in which the alleged inferiority of women has led to attitudes, beliefs, and behavior that promote subordination and oppression.

This short account reveals through her achievements and experiences Cole's honesty and fairness. She is painfully aware of the reality of the present condition of African Americans. She is hopeful but realizes a more just and fair society here and elsewhere has to be attained through determined struggle. The photo on the book's cover of her with her clenched fist is symbolic. That President Clinton bowed to conservative pressure and withdrew her candidacy for Secretary of Education, was, in this writer's opinion, a shame and a setback to democracy. Nevertheless Cole is still at Spelman and lectures widely and writes. She will not be silenced. □

Lawrence Browne

Stalin - Man of Contradiction; Kenneth Neill Cameron, N.C. Press, Toronto, 1987, \$12.95, 190 pp,

For anyone who has learned to probe deeper than the surface appearance of things, it is clear that the real target of the years-long assault on Stalin was

Leninism, and the new society brought into existence by the October 1917 Socialist Revolution led by Lenin.

That in itself is reason enough for anyone who seeks the truth to take another look at Stalin, his role, his strengths and weaknesses, his place in history. There is much to learn. What happened in the Soviet Union and in other former socialist countries makes this new look all the more necessary. This is so because in those countries the people will once again find it necessary to throw off the capitalist yoke and return to socialism.

And this requires learning the lessons of the past, its successes and their roots, its deficiencies and mistakes and their source. The lessons are invaluable for all who want a socialist world.

This cannot be done without a serious evaluation of Stalin who stood at the helm of the Soviet ship of state for 30 years. This was the time of industrialization, of collectivization, the victory over German Nazism and Japanese militarism, of the rapid growth of science, culture, literacy and general education.

These historic accomplishments of the Soviet people – which cannot be separated from Stalin's leadership – have been obscured almost to the point of obliteration by the incessant clamor of reactionary and liberal propagandists of capitalism who portrayed Stalin as a murderer and tyrant without parallel in history. As children are frightened by tales of the bogeyman, so was this scurrilous image of Stalin meant to intimidate one from a serious appraisal of socialism and the Soviet Union. In this way, the anti-Sovieteers sought to wipe out for all time the role and image of the Soviet Union as an inspiration and beacon light to socialism for humanity.

An atmosphere was created which influenced many on the left to either capitulate and join the anti-Stalin, anti-Soviet chorus or to maintain an embarrassed silence.

Yet history and scientific truth require that a serious, balanced analysis be made of Stalin as a Marxist and historic figure. In the given atmosphere, it took courage and dedication to the search for the truth to carry through such an examination. This Kenneth Neill Cameron did in 1987 in writing *Stalin – Man of Contradiction*. "My intention in this book," he wrote in the preface, "is to begin the balancing up in regard to both Stalin as an historical figure and Stalin the Marxist theorist."

This the author has done on the basis of available, verifiable sources. Undoubtedly more will be

written about the man of contradiction as more unimpeachable materials become available.

Whatever else may be said or written about Stalin, this book is an indispensable, fact-based study of the decisive, defining years of Soviet development, and thus of Stalin himself, which cannot be ignored or erased from history.

Referring to some published works in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death, Cameron notes that "it is disturbing that he [Stalin] is virtually written out of Soviet history, for instance in *History of the USSR: The Era of Socialism*, Moscow, 1982) ... and similarly written out of the current version of *History of the CPSU*" (p. 170) It is this kind of tampering with and falsification of history that fed the ideological cesspools in which Gorbachev, Yakovlev, Yeltsin and company became immersed.

It was tantamount to saying that the masses can spontaneously build socialism without any need for leadership and the guiding role of theory. It was an attack on the socialist direction and character of mass activity. This is decisively repudiated by Cameron in chapter after chapter.

Without Lenin's and Stalin's fight for revolutionary working-class theory and ideology, there could have been no successful building of socialism.

In the chapter "Stalin and Trotsky," Cameron shows how Trotsky's lack of confidence in the revolutionary potential of both the working class and the peasantry and "his absurdly left 'permanent revolutionary theory'," (Lenin's characterization) had to be fought in order to advance the cause of socialism.

In the struggle for the Five Year Plan, the opposition of Bukharin and others to building a heavy industry basis for industrialization had to be overcome to move ahead at the required accelerated tempo. Had this not been done, the Soviet Union would have been left prostrate before the Nazi military juggernaut.

In all these and other theoretical and ideological controversies, Lenin and Stalin gave decisive leadership without which the working class and masses would have been left leaderless and unarmed to meet and challenge misleadership from any direction.

This is not to say that Stalin blindly or unthinkingly followed Lenin, or that he was free of mistakes. On many matters, Stalin arrived at Leninist positions independently of Lenin. On a few rare occasions he was more correct than Lenin. I leave it to the reader to discover these occasions for him or herself. (In other words, get the book!)

Cameron also discusses Stalin's errors and crimes. He also discusses his shortcomings in theory. This, too, is a learning experience for the reader. Among other things, they deal with erroneous concepts on base and superstructure which gloss over the role of class struggle and feed metaphysical concepts, as well as underestimation of the role of contradiction as central in dialectics and instances showing that Stalin was not immune to some influence of philosophical idealism.

In a chapter on "The Khrushchev Report," the author discusses the 20th Congress of the CPSU. He shows Khrushchev to be the leader of an anti-Stalin faction which went into action right after Stalin's death in 1953. "In order to win the power struggle with Stalin's followers, Khrushchev had first to destroy the influence and image of Stalin and break the link between Lenin and Stalin," says Cameron. (p. 123) The author adds, "In spite of these motivations, however, there is clearly some truth in his [Khrushchev's] contentions. The trouble is that it is a fragmented truth divorced from a proper basic perspective." (p. 123)

Cameron places in a basic, historic perspective the repressions conducted in the '20s and '30s, in the course of which he cites Lenin's 1918 Letter to American Workers: "The English bourgeoisie have forgotten their 1649, the French their 1793. The terror was just and legitimate when it was applied by the bourgeoisie for its own advantage against the feudal lords. The terror becomes monstrous and criminal when the workers and poor peasants dared to apply it to the bourgeoisie." (p. 131)

Granted Khrushchev's well-meaning intentions, it is a fact that his exaggerations and half truths played into imperialism's anti-Soviet drive and facilitated the fabrication of the demon-ogre image of Stalin for that purpose. In making his balanced study of Stalin's role, Cameron gives the reader an important yardstick of measurement:

In making an evaluation of Stalin, we must first and foremost keep in mind that he was a Marxist and a proletarian leader; and for Marxists and proletarian leaders, special standards of evaluation are needed. If Stalin had accomplished for the world bourgeoisie what he did for the world proletariat he would have long been hailed in bourgeois circles as one of the 'greats' of all time, not only of the present century. The same general criteria should apply to Stalin's reputation from the Marxist point of view. Stalin advanced the position of the world proletariat and further than any person in history with the excep-

tion of Lenin. True, without the base Lenin laid, Stalin could not have built, but using this base he moved about as far as was possible in the existing situation.

There is more profound knowledge and wisdom in this volume's 150 pages (including 22 pages of illuminating notes), than is to be found in a thousand books written by bourgeois Sovietologists. □

Jim West

Reversing Discrimination: The Case for Affirmative Action, Gerald Horne, New York, International Publishers, 1992, \$6.95, 119 pp.

Gerald Horne's new book is an eminently useful, up-to-date, comprehensive study of, by, and for affirmative action.

He brings to this book his great strengths as historian and professor of African American studies, union attorney and activist - most recently garnering 300,000 votes as the Peace and Freedom candidate for U.S. Senate in California. In an amazingly detailed discussion of almost every aspect of affirmative action - presented in condensed form and popular, readable language - he makes an outstanding contribution to the literature of affirmative action and the struggle for equality. He fortifies the reader for this struggle. In his words:

Affirmative action is an absolute necessity if the struggle for democracy is to survive. Excluding categorically the racially oppressed and ethnic minority and non-minority women is a blow to the future of this nation, not to mention a crime against those who have to endure bias. Affirmative action, in expanding democracy, represents a step toward socialism. It is a battle that must be taken up with vigor by trade unions and all who are fairminded.

In this connection the author commends the labor movement for its track record in advancing affirmative action. For example, he cites the role of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union (AFSCME) in upholding the cause of equal pay for comparable worth. He says that this union shows what is possible with union action to close sexist and racist wage gaps. In fact, the labor movement and the entire multi-racial working class has an unalterable stake in affirmative action, since achieving labor unity revolves around affirmative action.

The bottom line of the corporate, right-wing attack on affirmative action is a strategy of maximizing profits through divisiveness and reaction, which are accompanied inevitably by attacks on labor. For example, Charles Murray, in his anti-people book, *Losing Ground, American Social Policy, 1950-1980* (1984), presents an attack on the "welfare state." He makes the main target the African American people to begin with, and on this platform leads into an all-out attack on labor and social gains in general – including disability insurance, workmen's compensation, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the food stamp program, Medicaid, and subsidized housing.

People today are looking forward not only to protecting gains, but want new advances, as the routing of Bush/Quayle and the ultra-right in the 1992 elections clearly shows. In this connection, Professor Horne upholds unity – multiracial as well as labor unity, and the avoidance of the ruling class trap of pitting one racially/nationally oppressed minority against another – as important components of the affirmative action struggle.

The author elucidates the deep historical roots of affirmative action. These roots stem not only from the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, and the 1950s-1960s upsurge; they encompass all past gains in the struggle against discrimination and oppression, notably the 14th and 15th Amendments and corresponding rights in state constitutions. The struggle to reverse the attack on affirmative action today requires a united, mass movement that will compel the Clinton Administration to implement affirmative action and support demands for higher living standards.

A salient strength of the book is the author's courage and honesty in "telling it like it is." The struggle for affirmative action is put in the context of pervasive capitalist institutional racism and the need for strong, effective measures to combat and overcome it. On this basis he puts the "qualifications" argument on its feet. He says: "This debate about qualifications obscures the real fact that institutionalized racism and sexism serve as a barrier to exclude non-minority women, racial and ethnic minorities – which is why affirmative action is necessary in the first place."

On this basis he also disposes of the tactic of agreeing to affirmative action while opposing its implementation when he writes: "... Quotas should not be ruled out as a remedy to address particularly noxious forms of discrimination."

The book opens with a helpful introduction that offers a compelling rationale for affirmative action, including definitions, concepts and persuasive answers to unfounded arguments against it. Next follow five incisive chapters. Throughout, Professor Horne relates his argument to an insightful discussion of relevant and recent judicial decisions, issues and developments.

In the first chapter the author gives a picture of affirmative action struggles underway, with attention to anti-discrimination issues on the job, in private employment, in the public sector, and in higher education. While making clear that affirmative action is of concern not only to African Americans, the second chapter places a deserved focus on the special oppression and needs of this largest racially oppressed minority – thereby strengthening the cause of all racially oppressed minorities and non-minority women. Horne establishes a working-class basis for the major role of African Americans in this struggle. In his words: "... Those who feel the most pain scream the loudest... The objective position of Black workers particularly predisposes them to pursue measures of benefit to the most oppressed sectors of the class, and therefore of the multi-racial working class as a whole."

The author also shows that whatever gains have been made by African American workers in the pre-Reagan/Bush period via affirmative action (as by the consent decrees in the steel industry, for example) are now falling victim to the cyclical and structural economic crises. In this connection, he raises the need for giving affirmative action a higher priority on all levels – in hiring, promotion and layoffs. Also it should be added, there is the urgent need for immediate massive measures to create jobs.

In the third chapter Professor Horne elaborates the importance of affirmative action to all nationally/racially oppressed minorities, non-minority women, and in fact the entire working class – "natural allies" in his phrase. He places sexist discrimination, as with racist discrimination, at the door of monopoly capital and its social institutions. He discusses such specific instances of discrimination as sexual harassment in the workplace, obstacles to job upgrading, discrimination in business loans, and sexism in the armed forces and the professions, as well as the special oppression of African American women, and the need for restructuring in these areas. "Ultimately," he writes, "affirmative action – a core component of the battle for democracy – must be extended broadly to all areas of society." In the

struggle for women's equality he notes that unionization has an important role to play. He shows the linkage between discrimination against women and against oppressed minorities, and also the struggle against this discrimination and the need for affirmative action. He goes on to present in-depth and concrete discussions of Latinos (with extended discussions of Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans), Asian Americans and American Indians.

The section on American Indians is overly condensed into three quarters of a page. As a result, features of their oppression are skipped over, such as the issue of sovereignty and their struggles on and off the reservations. For example, the frame-up of Leonard Peltier is mentioned, but the armed war by the FBI against the Lakota people and the demand to free Peltier are not. The ongoing drive of the U.S. Government and the corporations in tandem to throw indigenous people off their lands demands protest, especially on the occasion of this 500th year of colonial invasion and genocide, and the gallant stand of the indigenous people and allies against them. The struggle against imperialism at home is inseparable from imperialist oppression abroad.

Chapter four is devoted to the struggle for capital access to racial minorities and non-minority women. This is a struggle against discrimination by

banks, insurance companies and government in loans for business ownership and for homes. Horne says that the need for this struggle is shown, for example, by Rutgers University's tokenism in its \$510 million five-year building project. Only one African American entrepreneur has been involved and that for a mere \$60,000 contract. Rutgers palms this racist tokenism off as "affirmative action!"

As a result of this phase of the struggle, many cities and government agencies initiated "set aside" programs for minority and non-minority women-owned businesses. It is these programs that the U.S. Supreme Court undermined in 1989 with the *Crosson v. Richmond* decision. Very valuable is Horne's discussion of this decision, as well as the other four judicial blows delivered by the Court in 1989. The fightbacks against them resulted in the Civil Rights and Women's Equity Act of 1991, which is the subject of the fifth and final chapter of the book.

A review is no substitute for reading the book. Horne's book offers a rare contribution that must not be missed. Above all, use this book as a springboard to respond to the author's call for united mass action for new gains in the equality struggle in every aspect of the nation. □

George Fishman

continued from page 34

Balzac and Stendahl. Lenin praised Tolstoy as the mirror of the Russian peasantry, despite contradictions.

The present age has brought forward an avalanche of artistic outpourings, many of which fail to strike a chord, but when revolutionary form and content blend successfully, as in Bertolt Brecht, art has made a giant step forward.

Debates on art, literature, film, music and theater were alive in the circles in and around the U.S. Communist Party at the time when Brecht and Lukacs were having their discussions in Europe. Essays appearing in *New Masses*, *Masses and Mainstream*, *Dialogue* and elsewhere enriched our understanding and sharpened our cultural vigilance, even though inevitable errors were made.

Thousands of young artists, writers, film workers, composers, musicians, poets and dramatists carry on, all too often in the dark of anonymity, because they have creative drive. They can go on without Marxist-Leninist guidance, but without

such guidance they will be limited. Communists can go on without them, but without them we will be limited. Much valuable time has been lost. Marxist-Leninist education must be more fully developed, including the study of culture, art and aesthetics. It is a must for the future. □

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