

# Political Affairs

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The Young  
Communist  
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SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY, REFORM &  
RENEWAL AT WORK • GUS HALL





# political affairs

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# Socialist Democracy Reform & Economic Renewal at Work

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GUS HALL

On our return trip from visits to the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, our Party delegation had the good fortune to be in among the most exciting and dynamic concluding days of the June 19th All-Union Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Within a short period of two and a half weeks we touched base in three important socialist countries. Based on our experiences and observations, we reaffirmed a conclusion we had previously come to: that each socialist country is very different and, therefore, is building socialism on the basis of its unique characteristics.

This is so because each country started on the socialist path at a different level of economic, social and technological development. Each country has its own unique history, traditions, culture and distinguishing features and is therefore building socialism based on these unique characteristics.

Thus, the leaders of China say, "We are building socialism with Chinese characteristics." We need to study this approach and these uniquely Chinese characteristics.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is building socialism according to the *Juche* (bootstrap) concept, which was developed by the Koreans under the leadership of Kim Il Sung.

And, of course, in the Soviet Union *perestroika* and *glasnost* are the unique features of Soviet socialism today.

## NO UNIVERSAL MODELS

The uniqueness of each socialist society makes it crystal clear that there are no universal models that can serve as examples for us or for any other country.

On the other hand, it is also clear that there

are some basic socialist features that are the same in all the socialist countries. And there are also many new features that are similar in all the socialist countries.

All the countries in the socialist world are developing and experimenting with new forms of socialist democracy. They are all seeking ways to transfer more political power directly to the people, to broaden and deepen people's power at every level of society.

These different forms are also reflections of different stages in the building of socialism. They are also all striving to raise the technological levels of their countries.

In his time, Lenin said that electricity was the power base for building socialism. One gets the impression that socialism will ride the waves of the revolutionary discoveries in microelectronics, computer technology, fusion energy, laser beams, robotics and biotechnology to the next and higher stage of socialism. This is a central focus and top priority in all the socialist countries. It's like a high tech forced march.

All the socialist countries are, to one degree or another, making structural changes to streamline their economies and accelerate production. But the reforms take diverse forms. In all of them there is a process of decentralization of the government structure. Most of the socialist countries are also wrestling with a reassessment of their past policies and leaders—with some difficulties.

Although the goals are similar, there are still no universal models in these similar aims, because they are all going about achieving these objectives differently. Thus, there are no models that can be adopted, even where countries are developing in similar directions.

Socialism has become more complex, more heterogeneous, with correspondingly different kinds of social relations. There are joint ventures, private plots, land leasing, production co-ops, contracting, and private taxis and restaurants.

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Gus Hall is national chairman of the Communist Party, USA

One should not draw conclusions too quickly. In the past it was possible to make assessments and define stages more easily because socialist societies were much simpler, much less complex.

Diversity based on the unique features of each country is a positive, even unavoidable, and a historically necessary feature of world socialism. If it is rooted in the basic foundation of a socialist system, it is a positive development. This places the need for us to study further the particular features of our own U.S. experience, the history and present day developments that will be molded and shaped into the unique features of a socialist USA. As in all other countries, our U.S. socialism will be very much different. It will reflect our kind of industrial development, our traditions, our experiences with democracy, etc.

#### **A CONFERENCE OF THE WHOLE SOVIET PEOPLE**

Within this framework, the following are some preliminary impressions of the deliberations and conclusions of the truly historic 19th All-Union CPSU Conference.

The main objective of the June conference was to assess the first results of the restructuring, the reforms and the democratization process, and to chart the future course.

Further, the conference implemented and transformed into concrete economic programs the decisions of the 27th Party Congress to accelerate all the economic, political, ideological and social processes.

It is important to take note of the magnitude of the people's involvement in the conference. Five thousand elected delegates represented the Soviet population from every republic and region.

Most of the conference was broadcast live on TV and radio throughout the Soviet Union—including the speeches, the debates and discussions. The press was completely devoted to conference coverage.

In a very real sense the entire population participated vigorously in the discussions. The debates continued for days and nights in the hallways; it spilled into the streets, homes and wherever people gathered. During those days everyone was focused on and engrossed in the proceedings.

Through the mass media, especially TV, the whole Soviet people was immersed in this historic discussion of their socialist future as well as their revolutionary past.

Although the conference is over, the stage is now set for public presentation and discussion of the resolutions and the formulation of the proceedings into concrete plans and laws.

#### **THE LYING COMMERCIAL MEDIA**

The June conference was an assessment of the three years of perestroika and of how to advance the restructuring process, which of course cannot be separated from the democratization of social and political life.

The perestroika economic reform plan had already been laid out in the theses for the conference and in previous central committee meetings as well as the 27th Party Congress, which set the course for the acceleration of social and economic developments. The main discussion in this conference dealt with proposed democratization across the board, including the Party, government and the whole society—every stratum and sphere of life.

Unfortunately, here in the United States the people are getting a very distorted picture of what took place in the June Moscow conference and, generally, what is taking place in Soviet society.

Led by the *New York Times*, the mass media has reached a new low in misinterpreting and falsifying this important event. They have ignored the positive 95 percent and exaggerated and sensationalized the negative 5 percent. The truth is precisely the reverse of what Americans saw on TV and read in the commercial press. They blew up and played up the speeches and actions of a small minority. The fact is that most of the votes on resolutions were in the area of 4,500 for and 400 against. The voting reflected lively debate, but also overwhelming consensus on the proposals placed in Gorbachev's report.

#### **ASSESSING PROGRESS**

In respect to restructuring, Gorbachev cited some gains, but was also critical about developments moving too slowly, especially in such key areas as engineering, microelectronics, computer technology and raw materials. He outlined some

gains in agriculture, housing construction, health, education, environmental protection and improvement of the ecological situation, as well as wage levels and material incentives.

It is important to note that the conference did not formulate or pass laws. It passed resolutions that are now being used as the basis for new laws and legislation in every sphere of life.

One of the first concrete actions will be that of developing the process and apparatus for the direct election of a Soviet parliament next April.

One of the most important questions dealt with was the fine tuning, redefining and firming-up of the relationships between the Communist Party, the Government, and the Soviets of People's Deputies—from bottom to top and on all levels.

### **POLITICAL REFORM**

The resolution on reforming the political system clearly delineates the respective functions of Party and Government bodies in line with the Leninist concept of the role played by the Communist Party as the political vanguard of society, and the role of the Soviet state as the entity organizing and administering popular power.

The resolution mandated greater authority and power to the Soviets on all levels, along with greater responsibility and duties.

The resolution calls for direct election of government officials. It more definitively separated and clarified the roles and responsibilities of the government and the Party, which had become cloudy, with no clearly defined guidelines for the relationship between what are the Party's responsibilities and what are the government's.

Because of this, the relationships, roles and responsibilities were diffused unevenly, throughout the country. As a result those who wanted to use this lack of clarity for their own selfish purposes were able to do so within the old, loose framework.

In his report Comrade Gorbachev said:

Lenin repeatedly pointed to the harmful nature of the notions that a governing party must directly administer—ignoring or replacing other organizations of working people.

He insisted on the need to delimit much more precisely the functions of the Party (and of its central committee) from those of Soviet government. He

strongly criticized attempts to saddle the Party with the responsibility for solving every specific problem and censured the practice, whereby minor matters are dragged before the political bureau. [*Report by the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Mikhail Gorbachev, to the 19th All-Union Party Conference, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1988, pp. 81*]

The conference decided on greater responsibilities for both the Party and the government. The resolution clarified the separate tasks of each and the main discussions were around these questions.

In the past, the Party made most of the decisions and was the main force in carrying them out. This left the Soviets waiting for Party initiatives and instructions. From now on, the Party will have to carry out its work on the basis of convincing people, including government personnel. It will function more as a political party, with political responsibilities.

The delegates rejected all proposals to establish a multi-party system. However, now the Communist Party, the party of the whole people, will have to function as the Leninist vanguard of society, a vanguard that gives leadership because of its advanced political and ideological ideas. On this basis it will be able to energize and mobilize society through its theoretical, ideological and organizational work—inspiring and encouraging the people as it guides the whole society through higher and higher stages of advancing socialism.

The Party will no longer make decisions for government bodies and expect them to be carried out simply because they are Party decisions. Therefore, as the Party pursues its vanguard role it will have to convince people, to bring them along with it.

This reminds us of the CPUSA's concept that it is not enough for Communists to be right, to be correct. We have to be right in creative, popular ways that win people over to our positions. It will take some time for Party cadre to learn new ways of thinking, new approaches and new methods.

### **SEPARATION OF POWERS**

There were questions about whether these changes signal a downgrading of the Party's role. Quite the opposite is true. The Party will have a

bigger influence. But its influence among the people will be based on conviction, not decisions. The Party will function as a truly vanguard party that gives leadership because of its advanced political and ideological ideas.

This separation of powers—a redistribution of functions and authority—places the responsibilities of running the economy, production, defense of the country, markets, finances, budgets, distribution of goods, the educational and healthcare systems on the government, at all levels. This has to be seen in the context that all government bodies will now be democratically elected.

Government officials and personnel will no longer be able to hide behind the Party. They will have direct responsibility and accountability in all those areas. And all this is placed in the framework of decentralization, self-regulation, self-government and self-financing. This adds new, dynamic dimensions to the advancement of socialist democracy.

The resolution on democratization sets the tasks of giving the widest possible scope to society's self-government, creating conditions for advancing the initiatives of individual citizens, representative government bodies, party and public organizations, as well as work collectives.

The resolution includes a section on upgrading the role and activities of all people's civic organizations, starting with the trade unions, women's organizations, youth, academic, cultural, artistic, cooperative and all other people's mass organizations. They will become much more influential and authoritative.

#### **INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Because of the great changes being proposed and discussed, the debates at times were rather sharp and heated, not only in the conference hall but also in the streets, homes and institutions throughout that vast land. Great emotions and tensions were released. All, without exception, now feel free to say whatever they wish.

In fact, the Soviet people now feel they have a civic duty to express their views.

There is such an explosion of self-expression that one begins to realize that not all the participants, including some leading cadre, understood that in assuming such rights one must also assume the responsibility to refrain from slander,

from exaggeration or falsification, from provocations, from any words and deeds that move in the direction of dividing society.

Participants in a free debate have the responsibility to keep the arguments within the limits of the collective, within the parameters of socialism and humanism. Debates in a socialist democracy have to be about building socialism, not about destroying it.

Full development of this will all come with time—with new experiences and new ideas the majority will conclude that the greater the individual rights the greater the personal responsibility. This will result in new forms of socialist democracy that will conform more closely to a truly Marxist-Leninist, humanist society.

In his report Mikhail Gorbachev set some guidelines.

But like any other token of democracy, glasnost presupposes a high sense of responsibility, it is incompatible with any claim to monopoly of opinion, with imposition of dogmas in place of those that we have rejected. It is incompatible with group interests, and doubly so with any distortion of the facts and with any settling of personal scores.

It is exceedingly undemocratic to deny people who had been subjected to criticism a chance to reply to that criticism in substance. That is not glasnost and it is totally impermissible to use discussions, meetings, the press, and the television screen for squabbles or insults, and for name calling.

At the same time, there are still cases when criticism is suppressed and even punished—and we must say so bluntly at our conference. We come up against it in party organizations, in work collectives, in civic organizations, in the governmental apparatus, and also in relation to the mass media.

All too often, the vigor and steadfastness of Soviet people in bringing to light concrete faults, and their stand against red tape and irresponsibility, against official abuses, tend to generate a furious reaction. And again, we see officials gagging people, and even persecuting those who raise their voice in defence of the truth.

Party organizations and party committees at all levels must stand guard over criticism and self-criticism, and act from positions of principle. Our mass media can play an enormous role in cultivating political culture and a civilized attitude in human relations, and, among other things, by setting the right example.

I want to say categorically, here at the conference,

that we shall continue to develop all truly socialist values, and firmly eliminate everything that distorts revolutionary theory and the image of socialism . . .

We want a socialism that will absorb all the progressive experience in world history and that relies to the fullest on the achievements of human progress. [pp. 87-88]

### THE ROAD TO GREATER DEMOCRACY

One of the more sharply debated proposals was the concept that, on all levels, the top secretary of the Party should also be elected as the top official in the government. The wording in the resolution is "should be elected." But the proposal states that "it should become the norm." This means that the individual who is General Secretary of the Communist Party, should be President of the country, that this same structure should be the case from top to bottom.

Gorbachev's report states,

Naturally the nomination of a Party secretary may not always be supported by the deputies. If that is the case the Party committee and the Communists will obviously have to draw the necessary conclusions. [p. 47]

This means that the Party would have to elect a Party Secretary who could then be elected by the government body.

Of course, as an outsider it is not easy to make accurate judgments on concrete questions. But it appears that the concept of one Communist leader holding both top posts—Party and Government—is not in keeping with the policy of promoting greater democracy.

Of course there is the valid argument that this structure creates the basis for the more efficient and smoother functioning of bodies, and makes relationships easier. This is a legitimate argument.

The argument is also made that in this setup the Party Secretary becomes a publicly elected leader. However, it seems to me there are other ways to test the popularity of a Party leader.

### DEALING WITH LEADERSHIP

There was another heated moment when a secretary of a very small area made a speech criticizing the past histories of some who are still in leading

positions. When Gorbachev asked him to name them he responded by pointing to Andre Gromyko and three others. In his remarks, Comrade Yegor Ligachev took on this slander and defended the leading comrades named.

Another such moment came when Boris Yeltsin, the ex-Party Secretary of Moscow, took the floor and asked to be "rehabilitated" to his former post. When the full story of his outrageous behavior was exposed, including his going to the bourgeois media—England's BBC and CBS in the USA—to vent his protest and to attack Political Bureau members, his factional balloon burst.

In a most interesting speech, Comrade Ligachev sharply criticized the opportunism of Communist leaders who resort to the bourgeois media to get what they want, especially on internal affairs and at a critical moment in world history when the Moscow Summit was in progress.

After Gorbachev's further remarks in his summary, whatever support Yeltsin had had, he lost by the end of the conference. After all, he had resigned from the very post to which he was asking to be "rehabilitated."

### DEALING WITH HISTORY

Another important question, which exists also in other socialist countries, is the problem of how to deal with mistakes that were made in the course of the history of each country.

Some tend to deal with their history by simply ignoring what the struggles were about, what the enemy was like, even ignoring the existence of the class enemy. They deal with history without space and time.

Some of the articles by academics and intellectuals, now being published, purport to deal with these questions in the name of self-criticism and cleansing their authors' political and ideological souls. But in fact, they deal with the mistakes of Stalin (and even Lenin), without any reference to what the struggles were about, or what the enemy was like—or what the balance of forces were.

In these articles, by omission and by excusing the actions of the enemy, Stalin becomes the main culprit, the enemy in Soviet history. By omission and inference, fascism and monopoly capital were not the cause of World War II: it was brought on by the mistakes of Stalin!



By omission, Hitler and Mussolini get off the hook. By omission, fascism itself is whitewashed.

In these articles one gets no idea about what the struggles were like.

The young generations who did not live through the actual experiences are reading these false interpretations of history and are getting a distorted view.

History is distorted when there is no discussion about the nature of the class enemy, or what the problems were in building socialism in a backward country—while surrounded by aggressive capitalist nations, while being blockaded and boycotted and invaded.

It is a distortion to write about Soviet history, including the history of collectivization, and not say anything about the class nature of the kulaks who killed, terrorized and burned crops.

When there are omissions or when the whole truth is not told in the teaching of Soviet history to students, the building of socialism can be seen as 70 years of blunders and crimes. Instead of heroes and heroines, the people are seen as backward, docile puppets.

An example of an irresponsible article is one in the *Moscow News* that says Joseph Stalin was a tool of the Jewish members of the Political Bureau, a tool of a Jewish conspiracy. To discuss events in history as if they took place in a vacuum, as if there was no class struggle, is a severe distortion. It is a falsification of history and reality.

However, the great majority of the delegates to the 19th All-Union Conference, sensing this weakness in some of the pre-conference discussion, gave their loudest applause to the speakers who placed the mistakes, including Stalin's crimes, in the context of the great heroic struggles and achievements of the Soviet people.

Yuri Bondarev, Vice-Chairman of the Union of Writers of the Russian Federated Republic, spoke to these problems.

Some writers have understood perestroika as destabilization of everything, a revision of faith and ethics. Of late, even serious press organs have been encouraging "the knights of extremism," calling in question almost everything—ethics, courage, love, art, talent, family, and great revolutionary ideas. These nihilistic critics are becoming a commanding force in the press. They are convinced that the time has come for them to dic-

tate policy in literature and rule over people's destinies and souls . . .

There has been a breach of confidence, particularly among young people, in truth, history, almost in everything that happened in the past, in the older generation, in human dignity and justice. Objective glasnost is often turned into a one-way street: the one who is criticized has no right to a response . . .

We do not need to raze the old world to the ground; we do not need to trample down the millet somebody has sown by the sweat of his brow. We do not need to use modern bulldozers to destroy the foundation of the not-yet erected palace.

We are against making our mind a basement of conscience, and our doubts a passion. Man must not be a guinea-pig under history's laboratory scalpel.

Having started perestroika, we want the not-yet cognized beauty of nature, the whole world, events and things to open for us. And we want to save the culture of any nation from an unjust verdict. We do not want our society to become a crowd of lonely people, a voluntary prisoner of commercial consumerism with its alien omnipresent advertising of luxurious life. [Quoted in Novosti Press Agency release, June 30, 1988]

#### THE CONFERENCE IN PERSPECTIVE

All in all, the conference was a history-making event. It achieved the goals it had fixed for itself, won the people to the future tasks and set the stage for reaching new levels of socialist democracy.

The following from Gorbachev's report captures the essence of the new image of socialism that emerged at the conclusion of the conference:

We see socialism as a system of true and tangible humanism in which man is really the measure of all things. The development of society, from the economy all the way to the spiritual and ideological sphere, is directed to satisfying the needs of people and their all-round advancement. And all of this is achieved through the labor, creativity and energy of the people themselves.

We see socialism as a system with an effective and dynamic economy based on the finest achievements of scientific and technological progress and ensuring the highest possible productivity of labor—an economy that is directly geared to satisfying the needs of society . . .

We see socialism as a system of social justice com-

binning social guarantees of man's vital need for labor, health protection, education, housing, social security and consistent abundance by the principle of distribution according to work done . . . It is a society in which the abilities of the individual, the individual's fruitful labor, skills and talents, are valued most of all and are duly rewarded materially and morally.

We see socialism as a system of lofty culture and morality. It inherits and multiplies the finest achievements of humanity's spiritual development and rich moral heritage . . .

We see socialism as a system of genuine people's rule in which all working people have every opportunity to express their needs and interests and to participate in running social processes and in which the estrangement between the individual and the government is overcome. It is a society of socialist self-government by the people, of profound and consistent democracy in running the economy and the social processes, a society in which rule of law, openness and glasnost prevail.

We see socialism as a system of true equality of all nations and nationalities, a system in which they are

assured social and spiritual advancement and mutual enrichment, in which there is no room for any strife between nations, for nationalist and chauvinist prejudices, and in which internationalism and the fraternity of nations rule supreme.

Finally, we see socialism as a system which organically aspires by its nature and interests to peace and to strengthening cooperation and joint action by the fraternal socialist countries and to normal, civilized relations between all nations and states on the democratic principles of equality, non-interference in each other's affairs and recognition of the sovereign right of the people's to shape their future as they see fit.

This is the democratic and humane image of socialism that we have in mind when we speak of the qualitatively new state of our society as an important stage in the advance to communism. [pp.89-90]

This description captures the essence of the vision that emerged from the conference, the great restructuring mechanisms and democratic processes that are unleashing the unlimited potential of Soviet socialist society. □



# Youth in the Anti-Reagan Upsurge

JOHN BACHTELL

*The 3rd National Convention of the Young Communist League was held June 17-19 at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MA. This article is an abridgement of the convention report delivered by John Bachtell, National Chairman of the YCL and a member of the National Board, CPUSA.*

THIS IS NOT ONLY AN IMPORTANT OCCASION for the YCL, but is also a great moment for our country. As with every violent storm, changing weather patterns sooner or later break up the fiercest of winds and blow them away. The storm clouds of Reaganism that ravaged our land for the last eight years, are beginning to break up. A bright sun is beginning to shine through in places. Fresh breezes are building up that can blow the stench of the pro-corporate and anti-people policies of the Reagan administration out to sea. Fresh breezes are gathering that can clear away the Reagan storm so that the people can rebuild their lives from the wreckage of the Reagan years. As at the end of every destructive storm, the people are looking with great anticipation, hope and optimism to the future.

This is not a special moment because Jupiter is aligned with Mars, or the moon is in the seventh house or even because it's the age of Aquarius (Reagan's astrological sign). It's a special moment because a great movement is sweeping the country from one end to the other. The majority of the people, in one opinion poll after another, are against Reaganism, racism, intervention, apartheid, and are for peace and disarmament. These majority sentiments have all joined together in a growing tempest that's just gaining momentum. This great upsurge is changing the politics of our country.

Fresh breezes are blowing through every factory, fresh gusts are sweeping through every strike picket line, fresh gales are breaking up the fog from every voting booth, fresh swirling

winds are isolating the racists and ultra-Right on the campuses and in the communities. The rising winds are gathering to blow away the clouds of nuclear war, of economic injustice and racial oppression.

The storms of Reaganism, fueled by the ominous thunder of big business and the military corporations and the hail storms of the ultra-Right have been weakened. The fresh warming currents led by the working class, the trade union movement, the Afro-American people, the peace and youth movements have been strengthened.

These powerful winds defeated Bork and contra aid. They forced the most anti-communist president in our history to sign the INF treaty and visit the "Evil Empire," where he was compelled to concede that "momentous changes were occurring." The gathering winds of change have come together in the historic campaign of the Reverend Jesse Jackson. These progressive and liberal forces see in the Jackson campaign an anti-corporate, pro-labor and pro-people program that addresses their desire to take on the multinational corporations and military industrial complex, racism and injustice.

## YOUTH AND STUDENTS ARE ROCKING TOO!

Youth and students are rocking to the quickened beat of this great movement. Everywhere youth are busting loose and taking a stand. Youth are getting more active because they are getting angry, frustrated, fed up and impatient for change.

Most youth grew up under Reaganism. They remember little of previous administrations. What they've seen they don't like. A majority of youth reject Reaganism. Their thinking has also been shaped by the broad struggles against Reaganism. Youth are excited that something new is on the horizon.

This fresh spirit is reflected in youth culture.

The popularity of peace signs, "Central Committee" chic fashions, the U.S.-Soviet rock concerts, the millions who joined the one billion worldwide watching the Freedomfest for Nelson Mandela, the involvement of pop stars in the Jesse Jackson campaign, and in struggles against homelessness, plant closings, hunger, and drugs. And this spirit is vividly seen in the thousands of youth who came to New York City on June 11th for the anti-nuclear demonstration at the United Nations.

### A GROWING LEFT

One of the most important new developments is the rapid shift Leftward of a growing number of Americans. More and more are seeing that Big Business and the rich are the problem.

The growth of the Left among youth has been dramatic. At the Rutgers Student Convention 200 were expected to establish a Left student organization, 750 showed up. Of all the presidential candidates, Jesse Jackson drew the largest youth crowds on the campuses and communities, garnering the most votes and generating the greatest amount of enthusiasm. His highest vote percentages were often among the youth of ages 18 to 29.

On many campuses Left-progressive coalitions are emerging to give leadership to broad sections of student body opinion. In many places Left-progressive electoral slates have swept the Rightwing from student governments.

Youth are taking more militant action. One estimate is that 20,000 students have been arrested in campus protests over the past couple of years. At last count, there were more than 15 sit-ins and building-occupations on the campuses during the spring, four of which were led by YCL clubs. Students in ever greater numbers were protesting the CIA, racism, apartheid, and tuition increases.

Along with the growing Left, there is a decline in anti-communism. The graduating class at City University of New York Law School created a huge furor by selecting the *International*, the anthem of the world Communist movement, as the music for their commencement.

Perhaps the best indication of the growing Left sentiment is the response to Communists, the YCL and to this convention. Some of the largest crowds on any campus come to hear Communist Party leaders like Gus Hall and Angela Da-

vis. The election of Jason Rabinowitz as co-president of the Student Government at UMass created immense interest and a great deal of excitement throughout the country. Other public YCLers are being elected to student government, getting national and local press coverage and becoming widely known personalities and leaders.

When the ultra-Right attacks and tries to use red-baiting to divide coalitions and isolate the YCL, today student organizations come forward to defend the rights of Communists to participate. Students understand that an attack on the rights of the YCL is an attack on the rights of all. This is something new and part of the shift in thinking. This is part of the great democratic upsurge taking hold in our country.

### REJECTION OF THE ULTRA-RIGHT

Because a majority of youth reject Reaganism, the ultra-Right is being isolated. On some campuses their tactics have so infuriated the majority of students that they are being kicked out of office and are losing their funding.

The ultra-Right tried desperately to stop the INF treaty, to by-pass the will of Congress in the Iran-contra affair. Meanwhile on campuses they are taking a cue from their hero Ollie North: anti-democratic and slanderous methods are used to defeat the will of the majority of students. This includes attempts to steal student government elections as at UMass, Amherst. They are not acting from a position of strength but from a position of weakness, increasing desperation and cowardice. But the ultra-Right is learning that, as the American people reacted negatively to the Iran-contra expose, youth are also rejecting ultra-Right tactics on campus.

### REAGAN'S LEGACY—A PEOPLE'S DISASTER

The Reagan years have been the most unrestrained period of greed and pillage by Big Business pirates in our country's history. Reaganism has been great for the corporations but a disaster for the working class and people. Reagan will leave with corporate ripoff profits at an all time high. The bottom 60 percent of the people are taking home less of the country's total income than they did 30 years ago.

Reagan's support for union busting, deregulation, plant shut-downs, slashed wages and a \$600 billion tax gift are the basis of the profit bonanza for Big Business. During the Reagan years



real wages have declined by 17 percent. The majority of families for the first time in our history must have two wage earners to make ends meet.

There are nearly 70 million people who live below the poverty line, 3-5 million homeless, 20 million unemployed. In addition to all these forget-me-nots, Reagan will leave behind a \$2 trillion public debt and a \$300 billion budget deficit.

Between 1975-84 the real wages for young workers aged 20-24 plummeted by 30 percent, and for young Afro-Americans by 50 percent. The typical income of a young family with children headed by a person under 25 years of age fell by 43 percent from 1973-86. 10 million workers are stuck making the devalued minimum wage, and 30 percent of these are youth.

The Reagan Administration has been the most racist—undermining civil rights laws, affirmative action decrees and forcing racist cuts in social spending.

The Reagan Administration has been the most corrupt administration in our history, both at home and abroad. Reaganism has blatantly disregarded the democratic structures of our Constitution and the rights of the people.

Reaganism was great for the military and military corporations as it undertook the biggest military buildup in history. But the buildup took us to the brink of nuclear catastrophe and the cuts in social spending left our country defenseless against the crisis of everyday life.

The huge cuts in social spending have devastated the educational system. They have led to astronomical dropout rates in the high schools—75 percent in Detroit, 50 percent in Chicago, and in New York City, 75 percent among Puerto Rican youth, 50 percent among Afro-American youth and 26 percent among Italian-American youth.

Reaganism has created a crisis in health care. Thirty-seven million are without any health coverage, while others can't afford a stay in the hospital. The AIDS epidemic is rampant because Reagan refuses to allocate the massive funds necessary to find a cure.

Reaganism has been great at tightening the stranglehold of corporations, the military and the CIA on the campuses. But Reaganism has been a disaster for students. Democratic rights are being curtailed. Grants have been eliminated, college costs have skyrocketed.

Reaganism and the CIA have been great for

the drug pushers, but drugs are pushing our youth over the edge. President Reagan will leave behind other forget-me-nots: an out of control drug epidemic, tens of thousands of addicts, thousands of ruined and shattered lives, drug-engendered crime and violence. The CIA drug traffic serves a dual purpose: It is not only a \$100 billion dollar business and a foreign policy weapon. It is also a painkiller for an angry generation of youth with no future. The heroin and marijuana of the 60's is the crack and cocaine of the 80's.

Reaganism has been great for the landlords, developers and speculators. The Reaganite cuts have decimated public housing, helped create the homeless crisis and an army of 3 million homeless living in Reagan's hotels and tent cities across the country. Sixty percent of the homeless are women and children.

The people are angry and fighting mad because life has become intolerable. The offensive by Big Business has forced the working class to fight back.

#### **CAPITALISM IS ON THE SKIDS**

We can't place all the blame on Reaganism even though it's very tempting to. Reaganism is part of the system of capitalism on the skids. Capitalism, where the only goal is to make profits, offers no hope for youth. As hard as we might wish, the facts of life are that no young generation will ever have it as good as its parents so long as capitalism exists—not that the parents had it all that good!

The decline of capitalism has created permanent and long-term joblessness. Science and technology, which is used by Big Business to increase their profits, is developing rapidly. Capitalism is incapable of accomodating itself to the far reaching changes brought on by the introduction of new technology.

And tomorrow's jobs will require ever higher levels of education and training. With the crisis in education and greater numbers of youth dropping out of high school, young people will be locked out of the job market more than ever before.

Capitalism is a slayer of dreams. What the youth of Youngstown, Ohio need now are not free-enterprise zones and minimum wage jobs. They need a revolution to do away with Big Business. The youth of Chicago and New York don't

need lectures and part-time Job Training Partnership (JTPA) jobs. They need a society where people are put before profits. The students of UMass, Amherst don't need their tuition doubled or shouldn't have to have ROTC to get through school. They need socialism where education is a right and not a privilege and free of charge.

Everyone is concerned about gang violence. But the youth of Los Angeles and Detroit don't need more police terror, prisons and mass arrests. They need a real alternative with jobs, education and a community free of drugs. They need a socialist future.

We are optimistic about the future for youth under socialism. For youth, socialism is a harvester of dreams. Socialism is the only answer to the mounting problems, to the dead-end of factory closings, tuition increases, racism, homelessness and drugs.

#### **YOUTH AND THE '88 ELECTIONS**

Socialism won't come tomorrow, although we wouldn't mind waking up to it. The American people will decide how and when socialism will come. We have a stretch of road to travel before we reach that destination. Our path takes us first to the battlefield where Reaganism must be defeated. Fighting to unite the majority of Americans to defeat Reaganism is the only guarantee that there will be a new direction after Reaganism. The dwindling band of Reaganites know this as well as we do. They now are planning for Reaganism without Reagan.

On November 8th George Bush and Reaganism must go! The great democratic movement should crest on election day. The powerful currents should be channeled to carry downriver every Reaganite running—for president, the Senate, the House of Representatives, and in all the state and local races.

Because of the restrictive laws and the millions of dollars it takes to run a campaign, the Communist Party is not running a presidential ticket this year. But the Party and YCL are not sitting out the election.

Today the real possibility exists to elect many of the fifty Communist Party and YCL candidates running for local office around the country. The YCL endorses these candidates and pledges every effort to see them elected. We will help establish youth committees for the cam-

paigns, get speaking engagements on campuses and in communities and high schools. These campaigns will have a huge impact by raising issues and influencing the debate to the left.

#### **ANTI—REAGANISM UNITY**

A challenge facing the YCL and every activist is finding the ways to build the anti-Reagan electoral unity that will turn out the biggest vote on election day. For our part, we will continue to campaign for 1,000 actions that build unity locally and nationally to defeat Reaganism.

The YCL is for building broad voter registration coalitions with all those who are working to defeat Reaganism. The Rainbow Coalition has announced a campaign beginning August 1st to register millions of new voters. We should help to make this the greatest voter registration drive in history.

Some youth and student activists say: Stay home, voting does no good! We say just the opposite: Get out and vote! Staying home does no good! Youth's political power does little good if only 16 percent of the youth go to the polls. Let's turn around the voting record of youth so we can help turn the country around. It starts with voter registration, but it ends with every youth in the voting booth.

We support the idea being discussed of a week of youth and student actions prior to the elections. Actions on hundreds of campuses and communities and high schools across the country involving thousands of youth and students, around a unified set of demands: jobs, free education, health care, housing and ending the flow of drugs.

#### **FILLING THE VACUUM AFTER REAGAN**

After Reagan is gone, a vacuum will be created. We have to jump in and initiate new struggles that fight for a new direction.

We stand for the conversion of the economy to peace-related production and the massive transfer of money from the war budget to a peace budget. The future for youth is tied to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons from earth and space and transfer of money to civilian production. It's tied to a program that taxes the rich and corporations and takes the burden off the people.

The big job will be to reverse all the damage that has been done, to win back all the things

that Reaganism has stolen from the people. Part of this is the fight for an emergency national youth and student act. Other youth organizations have proposed such measures and today one is being debated in Congress. We are prepared to unite with any youth and student organization to enact legislation.

We need a National Youth and Student Act that would provide:

- A job, with affirmative action, for all youth; including summer jobs for all teens at trade union wages;
- A free college education for all youth who want it;
- Massive public funding to turn our high schools and public school systems around, including a campaign to wipe out illiteracy;
- Free medical care and a national emergency research campaign to find a cure for the AIDS epidemic;
- An emergency construction program to provide decent affordable public housing to all youth who want it;
- Free nursery and day care for young mothers who want to work and go to school;
- Massive funding for recreation, sports, and social centers;
- Emergency funding for drug rehabilitation. And if we really want to end drug epidemics we should start by abolishing the CIA, quit supporting the contras and take the profits out of drugs.

#### **UNITY—THE TOP PRIORITY**

The most critical question facing all movements today is unity. The unity of our multi-racial, multi-national, male-female, working class and people. The most important question facing the youth and student movement today is unity of Black, white, Chicano, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Asian, Native American, Caribbean and other minority youth. The greater the unity, the stronger the movements. Unity is decisive to every struggle, every victory.

It may be true that not everybody yet cares about the Communists, but the Communists care about everybody. One of the YCL's main principles is rejecting all things that divide youth. We reject racism, nationalism, male supremacy, anti-workingclass, anti-trade union and anti-communist ideas. These divide-and-rule ideas are pushed by the enemies of the working class and

youth, they are pushed by Big Business so they can make greater profits and maintain their rule.

The main divide-and-rule weapon is racism. The atmosphere of racism created by the policies of Reaganism and the ultra-Right has led to an increase in racist attacks in the communities and campuses. In response, an anti-racist majority of all peoples—Black and white—has emerged. The challenge facing youth and students is to find the ways to activate this majority sentiment against every deed and word that smacks of racism, bigotry, prejudice and discrimination.

In some struggles, in the anti-apartheid movement for example, separate organizations for Black and white students have existed over the past couple of years. This contributed to a weakening of the movement, and an inability to establish common national goals and focus. We find any idea promoting separate movements to be totally unacceptable and self-defeating. This separation goes against the grain of the thinking of a majority of youth.

The key aspect of fighting racism is the fight for equality and against racist discrimination in jobs, housing, funding for education, enrollment of students and hiring of faculty. This is why the YCL supports affirmative action quotas that guarantee equality and a national law that makes racism and racist and anti-Semitic acts illegal. These demands are in the interest of all youth.

The tactics of some student activists, especially in the anti-apartheid and anti-CIA movements, have led to their isolation even though a majority of students support their views. The challenge of the youth and student movement is to find the way to activate the majority sentiments of students in all movements.

On the campuses, wherever students are united, and work in a united way with campus unions and faculty and the community, victory is more certain. This is the experience at UMass, Amherst, Yale, Harvard and Wesleyan. These are examples of all-campus unity. When students are divided or the Left is isolated from the rest of the students, the faculty, the campus workers and the community, the administration finds it easy to use harsh measures such as expulsion or court action.

*The YCL is prepared to work with anyone at anytime. We are for greater exchanges and coordination of activities on a national level. We are for more joint action on specific issues by broad*

numbers of youth and students.

The World Festival of Youth and Students that will take place in Pyong Yang, capital of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea in 1989 is also a great opportunity to build broader and deeper relations between youth and student organizations.

We are for the establishment of forms that allow for greater cooperation in the youth and student movement. The trade union movement has its federation of unions in the AFL-CIO. It's time to form a council of youth and student organizations. At the very least we are for more regular conferences and meetings of youth and student organizations and activists especially meetings that plan joint actions. The times are demanding greater coordination, exchange of ideas and joint action.

#### **LABOR-YOUTH UNITY**

The youth have a stake in a bigger and stronger trade union movement. As singer Billy Bragg says, "There's power in a union." One of the best ways to help strengthen the trade union movement is through the Jobs with Justice campaign. Every YCLer, every young person has a stake in the "I'll be there" campaign. Our slogan should be "I'll be there and I'll bring some friends with me."

Many of the new jobs are in the low wage and unorganized service sector of the economy. The fast food and service industries have grown rich by paying minimum wages to youth. We can make a big contribution by helping to organize the unorganized, especially the unorganized youth. We want the young generation to be a unionized generation. Therefore every young worker should have a union card. Let's help launch a campaign to make the Big Mac and the Whopper *union* burgers.

#### **THE YCL BELONGS TO THE YOUNG GENERATION**

The YCL was founded at the height of the anti-Communist crusade of the Reagan Administration in 1983. As Reaganism has declined so has the influence of anti-Communism. Reagan's "Evil Empire" rhetoric may be ringing hollow today, but the YCL is on the march.

It is important to appreciate the new status of the YCL in the youth and student movement. Through our initiative, the YCL is emerging as a leading force. The influence of the YCL has

grown beyond our actual size. *Dynamic*, our student program, the Youth and Student Bill of Rights, pamphlets, articles, discussions and work with others are all having a growing impact. Our comrades are being asked to write articles, op-ed pieces, lead rallies and run for office.

We can be very proud of our work since the last convention. But we can't be satisfied. We have to set new and higher goals. The developments in the youth and student movement demand a greater level of responsibility and initiative from us.

We're starting "by looking at the comrade in the mirror." We have some real weaknesses that we must change to become better young Communists.

The YCL is an organization of action, education, recreation. Every club must gear up as a center of action, responding to events immediately. A club that takes action grows through action, especially united front action on the basic economic and social questions youth and students face. Clubs should be a constant bee hive of activity. But activity based on realizable goals that lead to building confidence and more action not demoralization and less action.

Every club must gear up as a center for education. Every club should have lively debates on every question under the sun, including controversial questions. Every club should sponsor classes, discussions, establish study groups and show videos. We are guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism and not by astrological charts. This is the science that makes us unique among youth organizations. We should share it with millions of youth.

Every club must gear-up as a center for recreation. All politics-and-no-play makes the YCL a dull place. If others say, "Those YCLers are great leaders, and nice people—but are they ever boring," then your club "needs to change its ways."

The youth and student movement must have a bigger YCL. The sentiment exists across the country to build a mass YCL of action from coast to coast. Thousands of youth are looking for what we have. The YCL must find new and bolder ways to be public so youth know the YCL exists. Our YCL belongs to the young generation. Our doors are open to all youth who want to see a change in our country. Our insurance for a future, filled with all the things that make up the good life, is an active, fighting YCL.



## THE FUTURE IS OURS

Youth and students are fighting for the future. A future without Reaganism. A future without racist violence. A future where education is a right, not a privilege. A future where everyone has a decent job at a decent trade union wage. A future free of cocaine and crack. A future of peace and friendship with youth from other countries. A future where we too can enjoy a full and happy life. That future is ours, because the future belongs to those who unite and fight for it.

In the words of Langston Hughes:

*We have tomorrow*

*Bright before us*

*Like a flame*

*Yesterday*

*A night-gone thing*

*A sun-down name*

*And dawn-today*

*Broad arch above the road we came*

*We march!*

## SUMMARY

This has been the most exciting and best convention we have had. As the YCL grows and gets better, each convention should be better. This is what a YCL convention should be about—politics, culture and plenty of partying and fun. An indication of how fantastic this convention has been is that over 40 new members joined the YCL this weekend. Since our pre-convention period began in February, over 100 new members have joined the YCL!

Through the news coverage, we have reached millions with news of the convention. This is a breakthrough for the YCL. It is another indication of the growing interest and curiosity about the League.

The Convention showed that the YCL is emerging as a leading organization on the campuses and in the communities. This marks a qualitative change from our last convention. Then the YCL was just beginning to make a turn from being largely isolated. But today the YCL clubs are leading struggles.

The Convention showed the emergence of a new kind of YCLer. Our organization is a treasure chest of gold. YCLers, in the organization barely a few months, are taking leadership and

showing initiative. While these comrades are new, they have accumulated a vast amount of experience in a short amount of time. YCLers are being characterized by their boldness, militance, creativity, breadth of tactics and complete confidence in where we are headed.

The emergence of the YCL as a leader in the youth and student movement places a greater responsibility on our shoulders. We must be more thoughtful as we give leadership to greater numbers of youth. In this period the youth will follow those who display the initiative. While it's true that a growing number of youth are becoming active, it is the YCL that will make a difference in helping to unite them and lead them in struggle.

There are a number of weaknesses that our convention also reveals. In the period ahead we must make a commitment to build our organization more rapidly among the industrial working class youth, especially in the midwest.

Many who joined our ranks remarked that the thing they were most impressed with is the multi-racial character of the YCL and the unity of Black, white, Latino and others in our organization. The YCL is a real rainbow and we are very proud of that. But again we are not satisfied. We are not satisfied with the numbers of Afro-American, Chicano, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Native American and other minority youth in the YCL. Our convention must make a commitment to recruit more minority youth.

The young women in the YCL are playing a growing and outstanding role. But again we are not satisfied by the numbers. Our convention must make a commitment to recruit more women.

The YCL must make a turn in the integration of culture into our activities. Culture is not something that should only appear at our conventions once every two years. It should be an ongoing part of club life. We should think about song fests, festivals, art showings and other ways for our artists and others to develop and display their skills.

The Convention reveals that the YCL is on the threshold of great and dynamic things. We are laying the basis for a tremendous growth in the organization, for an organization of 10's of thousands of members.

Congratulations for a great convention! □

# The Youth Speak Out

JOE SIMS

SOMETHING NEW AND EXCITING IS OCCURRING IN the youth and student movement. A new level of activism, a significant swing to the Left in outlook, and a growing pattern of unity are becoming more widespread. These trends were highlighted in all the reports, workshops and floor discussion at the YCL convention.

## TEMPE

Delegates reported many campus manifestations of this turn to the Left. For example, at the University of Arizona, Tempe, YCL member Marc Almarez described his club's work in the anti-Bork campaign and in the fight to stop contra aid. From the outset, the club established its public presence on the campus, initiating and participating in student coalitions. Almarez reported that student organizations, and students in general, readily accepted the club's right to participate in campus political life.

Not only was the YCL received as a legitimate partner but, as time went on, students began to look to the club for leadership. Almarez noted that because of its initiating, unifying style of leadership, many began to look at the League with growing respect. The ideas and program of the YCL reflected the needs and thinking of the majority of students. This coincidence of needs and ideas, of immediate economic and social requirements, and the changing thought patterns of students, demonstrated that the club was on the right track; it suggests that the thinking of students was gravitating to the Left.

An important indication of this gravitation to working class ideas and program is a corresponding decline in the influence of anti-communism. At the University of Tempe, the ultra-Right was infuriated by the role the club was playing. They wrote letters to the editor of the campus paper challenging the right of the club to participate

and attacked other organizations for being Left sympathizers. Very quickly these organizations and individuals rejected the red-baiting. They insisted that not only did the League have the democratic right to participate, but that its participation was sought after because of the relevancy and accuracy of its ideas. The ultra-Right themselves were driven into a corner: the isolators became isolated.

Yet another example of the willingness to accept the YCL's leadership was demonstrated this spring when Almarez was elected to the Student Senate.

## SEATTLE

The steady rise in Left ideas is similarly reflected in the experience of the YCL club at the University of Seattle in Washington state. The club's experience is living proof of the correctness of the YCL's line in placing greater emphasis on work on the campuses and the readiness of young people to embrace Left ideas and the League itself. The activity of the club on this campus revealed that the YCL must utilize multiple forms and methods of struggle.

The University of Seattle club combined contesting student government elections, publishing a campus newsletter entitled *Dawgtalk*, use of the PDW and *Dynamic*, and involvement in struggles around financial aid and other issues.

In the 1986-1987 school year, activities were initiated to build the club. It issued a newsletter and its editor, Mark Auerbach, ran for the student Board of Control. He presented a platform tailored to the needs and demands of the student body and was elected.

Building on this victory, the club in the following school year set itself the task of electing Mark as president of the student government. Understanding the need for all-campus unity, the club was instrumental in fashioning a broad slate for other offices as well.

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Joe Sims is national education director of the YCL

Endorsements were secured from several campus organizations, including the student newspaper.

Although Auerbach was not elected, several members of the slate were. The election was a victory: it contributed to building all-campus unity and significantly increased the prestige of the YCL. Most importantly, the club in the course of the election recruited many new members, almost doubling its size.

The main Convention report contended that not only have broad left currents taken root in the social consciousness of youth and students, but that also democratic majorities have formed on all major social and political issues.

The main trends among youth are a sharp decline in the influence of racism and anti-communism. An anti-racist majority has emerged and anti-communism is steadily diminishing as an effective means of dividing the movement and isolating the left and the Communists. The question before the YCL is how to galvanize these sentiments and forge a bigger organization and stronger mass movement.

#### UMASS

That racism and anti-communism are meeting setbacks is graphically illustrated by the experience of the host club of the convention, at the University of Massachusetts. This campus has been the unfortunate target of a carefully coordinated racist and anti-communist assault by the ultra-Right and was the scene of two widely publicized racist attacks. The campus was also the site of a massive Black-white fightback against racist violence and anti-communist provocations.

Important lessons can be distilled from the work of the club. The discussion showed that the multi-racial UMass club was uniquely positioned to take the lead and draw on the anti-racist sentiment of the majority of students. Once again by combining many forms of activity and creatively seeking ways to effectively channel the outrage of all students at the violence, the club emerged as a leading, unifying force.

After the first attack they held a widely endorsed Dance Against Racism attended by a few hundred Black, white, Latino, and Asian students. A few weeks later at the initiative of the YCL club, a coalition of student organizations invited Angela Davis to speak to a standing-room-only crowd of 1,200 students. Following this, a

multi-racial "March Against Racism" was held involving some 1,500 students. Because of the unifying work of the YCL club, the anti-racist feelings of the majority of students were given expression and the atmosphere was considerably improved.

When racist violence once again reared its ugly head in the fall of 1987, resulting in an attack on two Black and one white student, the club immediately moved into action. It joined several hundred Black students in a sit-in at the New Africa House and a YCL member was elected to a team of four students mandated to negotiate demands with the university's chancellor.

Understanding that the initial go-it-alone tendencies which resulted in an exclusively minority student sit in would only result in weakening the struggle, the YCL fought to unify all students in support of the occupation. The club initiated and organized several demonstrations involving hundreds of students in support; they wrote letters to the editor; issued leaflets; and participated in a moratorium on classes. As a result of this activity and the vigilance and determination of all students, new levels of unity were achieved and the demands of the Afro-American students were met.

The club reported that this effort set the stage for the student election campaign in which Jason Rabinowitz was elected to the position of co-president of the student body. Rabinowitz, a well known Communist, had been elected to the Student Senate a year earlier, and was a prominent leader in the fight against racism and for student rights.

The club along with other groups on campus, decided that the time was ripe for defeating a Center-Right coalition that had dominated student politics for the last few years. They formed a coalition, called United Student Agenda (USA), developed a broad slate, crafted a platform, and in a hotly contested election, won by over 400 votes.

Predictably, the ultra-Right conducted a vicious anti-communist campaign. However, just as in the example alluded to above at the University of Arizona, the anti-communist slander was turned into its opposite: Instead of isolating the slate and Rabinowitz, the red-baiting so infuriated students that many voted for the USA slate to protest the anti-communism. Students remarked that they knew Jason was a YCL mem-

ber; they chose to vote for him because of the quality of his work and the content of his ideas.

This experience demonstrates, as suggested in the main report, the trends among students clearly go in the direction of decline in the influence of anti-communism and the genesis of an anti-racist majority.

The discussion at the convention revealed that YCL clubs have acquired diverse experience and have achieved a new level of stability. Clubs are now active in communities, campuses, and high schools. Since the last convention rich experience has been gathered in learning united front forms of work and in breaking with sectarian, narrow, habits. A new level of cadre is emerging who have considerable experience in leading sit-ins, demonstrations, and forming coalitions on a wide variety of issues.

Particularly was the presence of over 40 high-school students, many of whom played a prominent role in the proceedings. Teenagers are taking leading positions in the ranks of the League.

#### BALTIMORE

The work of the YCL club in Baltimore, as evidenced in the convention discussion, is particularly revealing. The club is community based and is predominantly made up of high school students. Their report to the convention demonstrated great ability to creatively grapple with the crisis issues facing working class youth in the inner-city.

As reported to the Convention, the club, several months ago, began to organize around the problem of drugs and violence as it effects teen-agers after a friend of a YCL member was killed with a hand gun. The club organized a memorial service at a local church and began seeking ways to bring the problem to the broader public. The members latched on to the idea of holding a public forum on hand guns and drugs. They initiated a coalition of youth organizations in Baltimore to co-sponsor the event.

The club secured the participation of the NAACP youth and the local community youth. The event itself was held in a church and was attended by over 100 people. Speeches by teen-agers on the problem were combined with cultural performances. The event was a big success and greatly enhanced the prestige of the YCL which had played a prominent public role.

The discussion lent additional credence to the concept that multiple forms of activity are required to recruit and build the League. Reliance on one to the exclusion of all others leads to a dead end and little or no recruitment. When clubs simultaneously combine several avenues of struggle, along with an active public presence, growth is sure to occur.

This truth was further verified by the experiences of many clubs. For example in an effort to implement the policy of placing greater emphasis on the campuses, clubs established study groups. If utilized correctly, study groups have proven an effective means of broadening the circles around clubs and of introducing youth and students to Marxist ideas.

Club experience has shown, however, that recruitment is not automatic. When not linked with struggle, public club presence, distribution of the *PDW* and *Dynamic*, these study groups tend to become ends in themselves and at times a substitute for the the YCL. However, when these activities are combined, recruitment can become a regular normal feature of club work.

#### WESLEYAN

The convention discussion also demonstrated that while this rule of work generally holds true, startling exceptions do occur. The development of Left thinking among sections of youth and students has reached such an extent that spontaneous recruitment of groups of youth and students is now becoming possible. Witness the example of Wesleyan College where during the Party/YCL recruitment drive a YCL leader spoke to a group of 20 students, 5 of whom joined on the spot. Before this speaking engagement, the YCL had had no prior experience on the campus.

Gus Hall, Angela Davis, and other party leaders regularly draw large audiences on campuses. Hall, speaking at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, just before the Washington summit drew over 700 students. YCL members credit his visit with enhancing the left climate and contributing to the Communist Party's and the YCL's prestige among students. Greater attention, it was stressed in the discussion, has to be placed on using events such as these for recruitment purposes.

Another important feature of the YCL's work is its electoral and legislative activity. The  
(Continued on page 21)



# Magnet for A Generation In Struggle

DANNY SPECTOR

THE MILLIONS OF YOUTH who have come to political consciousness during the anti-Reaganism upsurge are bringing specific features and a new quality to the people's movement. And no youth organization symbolizes this generation like the Young Communist League does.

From June 17-19 the Amherst campus of the University of Massachusetts became a point of convergence for the different streams of the youth upsurge. More than 300 young people participated, representing not only 25 states and the District of Columbia, but also the forefront of anti-Reagan action among youth. They came to discuss not how to get involved, but how to be better leaders of the struggles in which they are already involved.

Of the 259 delegates and guests, 17 percent were Afro-American youth and another 19 percent were other nationally oppressed youth. Forty-five percent were young women, and more than half were 24 years old or younger. Although the convention recognized the need to improve this composition the YCL is the most representative organization of the young generation.

Such statistics are important politically. For instance, the majority of the YCL membership consists of high school and college age youth. This reflects the YCL's decision to focus its work on the campuses, as well as the fact that the base of the upsurge among youth has shifted: young people are coming to struggle at an earlier age.

As the Main Report to the convention by YCL National Chairman John Bachtell points out, these "younger" youth are the generation of the 80's who have only experienced the Reagan administration and the struggles of the last seven years. "And what they've seen, they don't like."

They are more youthful, but serious about their responsibilities. They are very new to struggle, but excited and earnest about learning.

A case in point is a 17-year-old student who just finished her freshman year at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. She is a "red diaper baby," but was not politically active, including through her first semester at college.

At the beginning of the second semester she saw posters up around the campus advertising a talk by Joe Sims, national education director of the YCL. She was one of 15 students who came to the meeting, and one of five who joined the YCL on the spot.

The next week she and the other YCL members were part of the leadership of a two-and-a-half-week-long student sit-in demanding university divestment from South Africa.

The transformation from political inaction to leadership of a difficult struggle was rapid and thorough. One week she was worrying about grades, and the next week she was worrying both about grades and about strategic and tactical problems of negotiation, compromise and the maintenance of unity.

Most of the young people at the YCL convention were not at the previous convention. For the majority of these youth, their transformation into political activists and leaders was also rapid and thorough. This process of transformation is extremely exciting. As a Chicago YCL leader said during plenary discussion, "The good experiences make us sure about ourselves and the bad experiences make us stronger."

Conventions often generate their own excitement. Meeting other members from all parts of the country, knowing you are part of something big, makes you feel good.

That feeling was in evidence in Amherst. But by itself it could not explain the roaring spirit of the YCL convention. These youth came to the convention already excited. They pounded tables and floors, chanted "YCL! Give 'em hell!," stood up and cheered, applauded and sang. On the final day many delegates were reluctant to adjourn

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the convention—it had been that exciting!

In the last school year students sat-in and took over buildings on 15 campuses, on issues ranging from divestment to CIA campus recruitment to racist violence on campus. The YCL was in leadership of four of these sit-ins.

YCLers have been elected to student government at UMass-Amherst, Brooklyn College, Brandeis University, Arizona State University at Tempe, Iowa State University at Ames, and the University of Washington-Seattle. YCL leader Jason Rabinowitz was elected copresident of the student government at UMass-Amherst in an election campaign that drew national attention.

Many YCL clubs received "Outstanding Club Awards" at the convention for actions on behalf of the young generation. The Baltimore YCL was honored for initiating a citywide campaign linking street violence to the lack of recreational facilities. The Chicago YCL received an award for its campaign to save the lives of 36 South African youth facing execution. The Brooklyn YCL was cited for its efforts to stop racist violence at Brooklyn College. The San Francisco and Los Angeles YCL were honored for running YCL candidates for public office.

In other words, the young people came to the convention with a spirit of struggle. They were excited to be involved and proud to be young Communists.

The discussion in the plenary and the workshops revealed the seriousness with which they view their responsibility to the youth movement. They didn't waste time with abstract theorizing; they wanted to know, step by step, how to lead other youth. In workshops on topics ranging from the anti-apartheid movement to problems of teenage youth, participants exchanged experiences on putting together coalition slates for student government elections; on what steps to take to unite separate Black and white divestment organizations on campus; and on how to help unionize MacDonald's and Burger King.

The convention opened singing "Soon and very soon we are going to change this world," and closed singing " 'Tis the final conflict, let each stand in his place." Between those two songs was a lot of singing, music, dance, theater, art and poetry. During the breaks in the plenaries YCL members and friends took to the stage to perform songs and skits.

Friday evening was "Poets' Night" as aspiring YCL poets recited for large crowds. The YCL Art Gallery was opened that evening and dedicated to Sima Shaeffer, a YCL artist who was killed in a traffic accident earlier this year. The works of 16 young artists were exhibited.

The "Evening of Song and Solidarity" on Saturday was a wonderful mixture of song, music, rap and poetry. It was followed by a dance that officially ended at 1 a.m. when the hotel ballroom closed, but didn't really end until 4 a.m. in the 4th floor hallway (and without endangering the convention's declaration of itself as a drug-and-alcohol-free zone.)

The weaving of art into the politics of the convention was in recognition of the increasing youthfulness of the youth upsurge. "All work and no play would make the YCL a dull place to be," remarked Bachtell.

Even the main report was not a main report, but a call to action, a youthful, militant presentation of the YCL outlook. It took less than an hour to present and set the tone for the discussion.

The participation of guests from the Soviet Union, the ANC, SWAPO, Canada, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, and the General Union of Palestinian Students was a moving experience for many delegates, some of whom came to the convention for the opportunity to meet these fraternal delegates.

The convention went wild over the Communist Party, USA. YCLers gave Carol Marks the longest standing ovation of the convention when she rose to speak on behalf of the CPUSA delegation. They especially liked it when she told them that they were the "liberation generation" that would live to see socialism in America. Chants of "CPUSA! Socialism in our day!" lasted for minutes.

A special informal meeting was organized Saturday evening at which more than 50 young people listened attentively as the CPUSA delegation answered questions about the Communist Party and its positions. The questions, often sharp but always honest, reflected both the influence of anti-communism as well as a sincere respect for the Communist Party:

- Why isn't violence against women mentioned or discussed in your press?

- What is the Party's relationship to the AFL-CIO, whose leadership is supporting concessions? Is it working with unions whose lead-

erhip is coopted?

- What is the Party's view of how the USA will become socialist?

- Why doesn't the Party criticize human rights abuses in the Soviet Union?

- Why isn't the Party doing more about the problems of Mexican immigrants?

- What is the Party's approach to lesbian/gay rights?

Six young people joined the Communist Party following this discussion, which lasted much longer than it was supposed to.

The convention projected ideas for united youth and student action, including:

- a national day of action before the November elections, to draw attention to youth issues;

- the formation of a national council of youth and student organizations to discuss and coordinate joint activity;

- a campaign to "make every Big Mac a union burger";

- a national preparatory committee for the 13th World Festival of Youth and Students, which will be held in Pyongyang, North Korea

next summer;

- a voter registration campaign; and

- developing labor-youth unity through participation in the Jobs with Justice campaign.

Nearly 50 young people joined the YCL during the convention, and they were welcomed with hugs, cheers and even parties. One young woman, who had joined just before the convention, told me that she had been nervous about going to her first meeting because she didn't know anybody. "But they made me feel like I was part of the family, like they'd known me for a long time."

There were some tearful hugs that Sunday, as old friends—and new friends who were now old friends—said goodbye. But they left committed to help lead their generation and convinced they could do it.

The Young Communist League is the right kind of youth organization for today because it fuses the character of the anti-Reagan generation with the science of Marxism-Leninism. That fusion is an indispensable part of the democratic upsurge against Reaganism. □

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**SIMS:** (Continued from page 19)

main report projected a strategic goal of reversing the downward trend in youth and students participation in the elections and pledged to register 10,000 new young voters.

#### CALIFORNIA

The discussion showed that in this critical area of struggle too, the work of the organization has been proceeding apace, albeit, with certain difficulties. Two YCL members are running for public office, one in Los Angeles, the other in San Francisco.

Speakers grappled with the problem of how to increase voter participation among young people and students. The need to offer viable candidacies, with militant yet realistic demands, tailored to the needs of local community was stressed.

Flexibility and the imperative of striving for breadth when initiating voter registration drives was seen by the discussants to be extremely important. Holding candidate forums, sponsoring debates on campus radio shows, developing

youth and student platforms, use of advertising by youth and student leaders, were all proposed as ways of stimulating and encouraging the vote.

**T**hat the new thought patterns in the working class and Afro-American communities have penetrated the youth and student movement, is clearly evidenced by the YCL convention, and events leading up to it. Something special, something altogether new and unique is taking hold among the youth.

The class struggle, the ideas of the working class and the Communist Party and the YCL are beginning to shape Left thinking among the young, thereby, raising to a qualitatively new level the potential that this generation will be the generation of socialism. The realization of this potential, the transformation of this Left sentiment into a material force depends on what those in the Communist Party and YCL do. The dawn of this realization has arrived for the YCL: on it rests not only our future but the future of the Communist Party as well. □

# You Are The Liberation Generation

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CAROLE MARKS

You look really beautiful! You filled every corner of this hall with warmth, creativity, art, poetry and song, with militancy, Marxist-Leninist politics and revolutionary spirit! It is a wonderful experience to be with all of you young fighters for a better America. I bring you, the Young Communist League, your fellow activists and friends, the warm, fraternal greetings of the National Committee of our Party and our National Chairman, Gus Hall, who very much wanted to be with you. He sends his fraternal revolutionary greetings to you, and a special welcome to your international guests, from Beijing, China. While we are making history here in the United States, Gus Hall is heading our Party's history-making delegation in China, where they are re-establishing fraternal relations with the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China.

By the way, you couldn't have picked a more perfect place to hold this Third National Convention of America's Communist youth, the University of Massachusetts campus that is making headlines and history. It is all a symbol of the new times.

The report presented to this convention by your National Chair, John Bachtell, and the discussions this weekend, make us very proud and happy that the YCL is our fraternal Communist organization in the fight for our country's inevitable socialist future. This coast-to-coast gathering of youth from the campuses, communities and picket lines represents the very best of the young fighters of our land. You are up front in the youth contingent of the people's movements of our country. You know where young people are coming from, where it is possible to go and how to get there. John Bachtell's speech graphically, poetically, captured the breadth of the League's achievements and victories. Its status, prestige and influence—nationally and interna-

tionally—has grown way beyond its numbers since it was born in 1983. What we've already heard at this convention makes it clear that Communist youth have become the magnet that energizes youth who are ready to unite and fight to win back the future stolen from them by Reaganism.

Let me quote from Gus Hall's speech to the founding convention of the Young Communist League:

You have to be youthful. But you also have to be serious. Therefore, you should be youthfully serious.

You have to be different from others. But also the same as the other young people. Therefore, you have to be differently the same.

You have to be principled. But also flexible. So you have to be principlly flexible.

You have to be bold. But you also have to be responsible. Therefore, you have to be boldly responsible.

You must have democracy. But you must also make decisions and give leadership. Therefore, you must have democratic leadership which is democratic centralism.

You have to be anti-imperialist. But not anti-American. Therefore, you have to be anti-imperialist Americans.

You have to do mass work and Communist work. Therefore, you have to become Communist mass workers.

You have to be militant and left. But not left out, like some of the tiny ultra-left and ultra-right sects who are way out.

Well, you can look at yourselves today and say, "We're doing it. We marched to the drumbeat of young America and thousands of youth all over the country are responding to our call and swelling our ranks."

Since that historic founding convention you have become Communist youth leaders. You have become a major force in molding the

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Carole Marks is a member of the National Board, CPUSA



thought patterns and fighting qualities of a whole generation. You are well on your way to meeting that challenge because you are faithfully reflecting—in thought and deeds—what young people are thinking and feeling, how and what they are ready to fight for.

This is a special time. In this great country of ours thinking and action, words and deeds, are breaking out of old molds. New thought patterns have captured the imagination of millions, and militant actions of protest and demands have taken hold.

This is a special time for the YCL as well. All the ingredients exist. All you have to do is mix them together. Today's new political climate, together with all the experience and wisdom gained in the past four years of activism, leadership, and learning are coming together this weekend. The discussions, decisions, and festivities will all be transformed into plans for tomorrow's exciting victories in battle.

This is a special moment because Reaganism is flunking out. We are about to graduate into the post-Reagan era.

We will put an end to eight years of a closed government, with a secret junta in the White House basement, eight years of open corporate warfare against the American working class, young and old.

We will put an end to eight years of an anti-human rights Administration.

We will put an end to eight years of trillion dollar corporate profits.

We will put an end to an Administration of cutting, cutting, cutting funds for student loans, food stamps, and child care.

We will put an end to an administration of spending, spending, spending—spending a trillion on military budgets, spending billions on Star Wars, spending billions on tax cuts for the rich and corporations, spending billions for contra gangs around the world.

This is a moment when, with people united in action, we can reverse the priorities, turn things around. What is the alternative to a life on drugs, on the streets, on welfare and unemployment? It is more than just saying "no" to drugs. We have to "just say no" to billions in corporate profits. We must say no to \$30 million dollar executive salaries; no to hundreds of billions in wasteful military budgets; no to Star Wars; no to contra Wars; no to racism and racist violence; no

to minimum wages and no wages; no to hunger and homelessness; no to graft, corruption, bribery and thievery—from the White House to Wall Street.

We can say no to the Reaganites, the Meeses, Kissingers, Kirkpartricks, Nixons, Norths, the Wedtechs, the GM's, GE's; the profit-hungry multinational corporations and the fraud riddled Pentagon.

Under capitalism no generation is ever handed anything on a silver platter. You are no different. In fact yours is the downward mobility generation, the first generation living the American nightmare of 60 million people who face an everyday crisis of living. You are the first generation that can never hope to live better than their parents. You have an uphill battle. At the same time, because young people will no longer put up with a society that just doesn't work anymore, yours is also the first generation that will live in a socialist USA. Hopelessness and despair, on the one hand, hope and new expectations on the other. Sounds like a contradiction. But it's not. Despair comes from passively accepting whatever capitalism forces on us day after day. The hope and new expectations come from fighting for a better society, a better way of life for all the people. And, the struggle itself makes us better people. It's a great way of life!

You are the liberation generation! And the YCL is leading the young workers and students who will be a vital part of the American working class. And one day—maybe sooner than you think—the working class will decide they have had enough of capitalism and that socialism is the only way to go.

What is organized, civilized society for if not to meet the people's basic needs? But capitalism is not capable of fulfilling them. It is a tired, sick and dying society, not fit for human beings.

Society owes the young generation not only the bare necessities—food, clothing, shelter—but a guarantee of the right to an education, to recreation, culture, a job, a decent place to grow, to live and raise a family.

We owe ourselves and each other a world at peace.

We owe ourselves a society that outlaws racism, bigotry, prejudice, anti-semitism and all forms of discrimination because of race, nationality or religion.

Organized society owes every generation a

health care, child care, and social welfare system. These are basic human rights of each new generation. If a society cannot guarantee these basic human rights it does not deserve to exist.

Our capitalist society is a remnant, a fossil of the cave man mentality. The exploitation, the inequality, the injustices that are everyday facts of life under capitalism will someday be looked back upon with the same disgust, even disbelief, with which we look back upon slave society.

Capitalist society does not recognize human rights. It recognizes only corporate rights and corporate profits. Not long ago the head of U.S. Steel confessed, "We are not in the business of making steel. We are in the business of making profits." Reading between the lines he was telling us, "to hell with the workers, to hell with the people."

The natural instinct of corporate heads is the drive for corporate profits. And this drive for maximum profits leads them to support war preparations and acts of imperialist aggression. Our capitalist society provides jobs only if they fit into making maximum profits. And, when they are not maximum enough, they shut down—wreaking havoc and misery in their wake. And Reagan, the corporations' handy man, has just vetoed a bill simply because it provides 60 day notice when a plant shuts down.

Capitalist society produces automobiles not because they are concerned about people having transportation. Corporations manufacture clothing not because they are concerned about people being clothed and warm. The banks and corporate contractors provide housing, only if housing construction is profitable.

The ruling class provides schooling, skills and training only if the bottom line is increasing

corporate profits. That's why corporate America never gives a penny for human needs willingly. They make concessions—wage increases, jobs, housing, schools, hospitals—only when they are forced to. It is this fundamental realization, simple but earth-shaking, that makes us Communists special. That is why we have earned the hatred of monopoly capital. And that is why we are part of the fastest growing and most exciting movement of history.

The people can force the multinationals and monopoly ruling class to make concessions. We can do it by united militant actions. But finally, after many more battles, the American people will decide that concessions are not enough. We will decide we want the whole pie instead of a smaller and smaller piece.

The whole pie means going out to win it all, a socialist USA, a totally new kind of human society based on human need and cultural enrichment, a society that is now growing, expanding and flourishing in over a third of the world. But it will not just happen spontaneously. Sure, especially among youth there's the wonderful element of spontaneity. But spontaneity won't a revolution make. In these special times, bursting with potential and change, students and youth need a strong, independent YCL. And the American working class and people need the Communist Party, USA.

The Communist Party, USA is proud and happy to be with you in the building of a history making organization of America's Communist youth. This is a great convention of the Young Communist League. Our Communist astrologers can see that there are many bright new stars shining. We can see the future and you look great! □

# Militarization of the Economy

VICTOR PERLO

MILITARY FORCE, AS AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF capitalist rule, has become decisive in the epoch of imperialism. And there are complex interrelationships among military force, economic power, geographic military-political expansionism and the export of capital.

Massive industrial strength, at the highest technical level, provides the material base for effective military power. That power, with its complex interrelationships, permits domination of economically and militarily weak countries—directly or by means of threats. And this, in turn, prepares the ground for foreign investments, which provide vital materials and cheap labor to the capitalist investors, still further inflating their profits and inspiring them to further expansion.

The relative economic and military strengths of the imperialist powers are also major factors in determining geographical spheres of interest and profitable foreign investments.

## WARS AND WAR PREPARATION

Since World War II the prime source of tension in the world has been the determination of the strongest capitalist powers, especially the United States, to prevent the spread of socialism and, if possible, to stamp it out. Continued economic domination of foreign holdings—resources and investments—depends on capitalist control. Corporate manipulators fear that the examples of successful socialist development pose a threat to their profits by inspiring peoples of countries that are victims of capitalism to rebel. The United States and its allies thus strive to prevent the national liberation of former colonies and semicolonies and, where more advanced and independent regimes have been established, to reimpose subservient dictatorships, buttressed

by U.S. or allied military bases.

Unlike historical periods, however, modern imperialist wars of conquest have not always been victorious. Prolonged, bitter armed struggles have led to independence in some colonies in Africa and Asia. More than a dozen developing countries have established socialist-oriented regimes and maintained them against interventions, which have often been made by puppet armies or armies of lesser imperialist states, notably South Africa and Israel. In a number of cases, U.S. imperialism has led successful counterrevolutions, and has installed vicious despots who have been responsible for the murder of countless citizens—as in Guatemala, Zaire and Chile. The most dramatic defeat for imperialism was the victory of the Vietnamese people over the vast U.S. armed forces.

Exorbitant funds have been allocated to prepare for wars by U.S. armed forces or by proxy counterrevolutionary forces under U.S. command. Preparations include stockpiling armaments, training troops, patrolling the world's oceans with the world's largest navy, and maintaining military bases in scores of foreign countries. U.S. bases completely surround the USSR.

A Brookings Institution report counted 215 incidents of U.S. bullying between 1945 and 1975.<sup>1</sup> And this count excluded the covert actions of the CIA, which were essentially military in character, and outright invasions such as in North Korea and Vietnam.

During the mid-1980s, the United States was involved in proxy wars against Nicaragua, Angola, Ethiopia, Kampuchea and Afghanistan. U.S. forces invaded Grenada.

The Irangate scandal of 1986-87 revealed that, starting with the President, the U.S. power elite, who had long ignored international law and withdrawn the United States from the World Court, also ignored the U.S. Constitution and laws. Presidential appointees abetted illegal, co-

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vert terrorist acts by the military attempts to conquer Nicaragua and to take over the Persian Gulf. Assassination of government leaders and repeated outrages have been standard practice.

#### PREPARATION FOR NUCLEAR WAR

The decisive portion of U.S. military spending has been to prepare for a nuclear war to destroy the Soviet Union. This objective has been clearly expressed in the rhetoric of political leaders and in formal policy statements. The goal is one-sided: the USSR has never threatened to attack the United States or any of its allies.

Washington has refused to pledge nonuse of nuclear weapons and to refrain from militarizing outer space. This stand has escalated the arms race beyond any rational bounds, as the Soviet Union has been forced to meet U.S. advances.

The aims of the most powerful imperialists and militarists were bluntly expressed in a World War II speech to the Investment Bankers Association by Virgil Jordan, then president of the National Industrial Conference Board:

Whatever the outcome of the war, America has embarked on a career of imperialism in world affairs and in every other aspect of her life . . . the economic resources and the military and naval strength of the United States will be the center of gravity.<sup>2</sup>

The decisive role of the USSR in crushing Hitler Germany and the decisive defeat of Japan's main armies by the Soviet forces made it clear that the Soviet Union was an obstacle to achievement of the expansionist goals of U.S. imperialism and that the U.S. would not be able to defeat the USSR in conventional warfare.

Therefore, the atom bomb came to be considered the means whereby it would be possible to take over the Hitlerite goal of destroying Communism.

But attempts to gain decisive political victories by waving the atom bomb were frustrated. The Soviet Union refused to be bluffed and, in a short time, developed its own nuclear weapons to end Washington's monopoly.

Robert C. Aldridge, an aeronautical engineer for the Lockheed Company, learned firsthand of the U.S. military's plans for an unprovoked first strike against the USSR. In 1983 he wrote:

By the mid-1950s the Strategic Air Command (SAC) was again preparing for a first strike against the Soviet Union with the result that "virtually all of Russia

would be nothing but a smoking, radiating ruin at the end of two hours." This planning was revealed in two recently declassified top secret reports.<sup>3</sup>

Aldridge learned from his own experience at Lockheed that the development of MRVs (multiple warheads on rockets), was to regain sufficient superiority over the USSR to launch a first strike. He revealed that in 1980 President Carter adopted Presidential Directive No. 59 (PD-59)—to:

Determine the nuclear strategy that would eliminate the USSR as a functioning national entity.

Investigate promoting separatism by destroying areas in the USSR which support the present Soviet government.

Identify targets which would "paralyze, disrupt and dismember" the Soviet government by annihilating the ruling group.<sup>4</sup>

By the 1980s, with the multiplication and technical improvement of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, scientific opinion in all countries agreed that a nuclear war threatened a "nuclear winter" that would annihilate the human race and most other life on earth. But the Reagan Administration became still more blatant in its threats of a first strike, especially after the USSR formally pledged not to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

This strategy has met a rising tide of mass public opposition in the United States and all other countries, aided by growing worldwide recognition of the far-reaching Soviet peace and disarmament initiatives.

These political facts underlying U.S. militarism must be understood along with an analysis of the economics of militarism.

The economic impact of militarism has become increasingly important as its relative scale has expanded and become a major feature of the economy in the United States and many other countries. Further, a bitter ideological battle continues over the impact of militarism on the economy: whether huge military budgets are "good for the economy" and provide well-paying jobs; or, on the other hand, whether militarization is economically harmful.

True, the economic factor is trivial in comparison with the ultimate issue posed by the nuclear war danger—to be or not to be. But political reality does not recognize such absolutes, and the economic issues must be examined.

## SCALE OF MILITARIZATION

The important British economist, John Hobson, wrote:

Imperialism makes for war and militarism, and has brought a great and limitless increase of expenditure of national resources upon armaments. It has impaired the independence of every nation which has yielded to its false glamor.<sup>5</sup>

Direct military spending accounted for about 40 percent of the British federal budget in the years before World War I.<sup>6</sup> The United States, building its overseas empire later than the European powers, lagged in militarization as well.

After World War II, the share of U.S. resources going for military purposes was multiplied many times and outpaced all other major capitalist countries. In absolute amount, U.S. military spending has consistently exceeded the combined total of all other capitalist powers. Virtually all of these nations are military allies of the United States, mainly in NATO.

The U.S. military budget normally ranged between 0.5 percent and 1 percent of GNP, except in time of war. It approached 20 percent of GNP in the Civil War and World War I, and 40 percent of GNP in World War II. Since then, it has ranged between 4 percent and 10 percent of GNP except during the Korean War, when it rose above that range. During the 1980s, the military budget was about 6 to 7 percent of GNP but was more than 10 percent of GNP if related items—such as interest on the federal debt, “foreign aid” and veterans’ pensions—were included.

During the period 1970-1985, direct military outlays were about 25-30 percent of all federal expenditures—40-50 percent, if related items were included.

Yet even these figures understate the importance of the military in federal spending. A large and generally increasing proportion of federal spending consists of strictly financial transactions. During the postwar period, “national defense” spending has accounted for about 75 percent of all expenditures for goods and services—that is, three-fourths of the actual activity of the federal government.<sup>7</sup>

The actual weighting of Washington’s activities indicates that *a fourth or less is spent on behalf of domestic interests of monopoly capital*

*and public needs: the bulk, at least three quarters, goes to extend and protect the international interests of finance capital.*

Between 1980 and 1987, direct military spending rose from \$143 billion to \$295 billion, or 106 percent, while “real military spending, adjusted for higher prices, went up 65 percent.”<sup>8</sup> This was a faster pace of increase than occurred during the Vietnam War. As the peace movement grew in strength and disarmament negotiations became more active and promising, substantial cuts in military outlays and reconversion of military facilities to civilian use were called for by trade unions, peace organizations and progressive political groups. But Congress, which has nominal powers to control the federal purse, exercised this power feebly.

## PROCUREMENT, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The decisive parts of the military budget are the funds spent for the procurement of weapons and for the development of new weapons. These categories are most sensitive to political changes, and most clearly reflect the direction of U.S. foreign policy aims. Other items, such as pay to the armed forces and maintenance, are relatively stable, except during wartime.

In real terms, adjusting for price changes, the Reagan Administration went well beyond Korean and Vietnam War peaks in weapons procurement, and it quadrupled the Korean War level of research and development (R&D), test and evaluation from \$7.5 billion in 1953 to \$28.9 billion in 1986.

This indicates that the United States, by the mid-1980s, *had established the main components of a war economy in a time of formal peace.*

World War II gave impetus to the scientific and technological revolution already under way. During that conflict and for decades thereafter, the military was the dominant factor in U.S. R&D activity. And the definite boost in R&D spending in the 1961-65 period was stimulated by the USSR’s successful Sputnik launch in 1957. This peaceful accomplishment, because of its potential military application, appalled U.S. leaders, demolishing their faith in U.S. overwhelming technical superiority over the USSR.

So the U.S. drive to regain strategic superiority meant developing better and more effective weapons.

According to the minimal estimate of the Na-



tional Science Foundation, the military accounted for 40 percent of all U.S. R&D in the mid-1980s.<sup>9</sup>

Preparation for nuclear aggression is dramatized by the scale of the facilities producing plutonium and nuclear warheads, which dwarf the size of the Manhattan Project of World War II. The *New York Times* editorialized:

The Reagan Administration . . . doubled production of nuclear warheads since 1980, mostly for new weapons . . . Nuclear warhead production is a huge industrial enterprise with 90,000 employees and assets worth \$25 billion.<sup>10</sup>

In a period of intensified international trade competition, where technical advantage is crucial, rival capitalist countries, focusing primarily on nonmilitary research, have realized a substantial advantage. According to U.S. government estimates, West Germany, the United Kingdom and Japan spent about the same proportion of their GNP as the United States—2.6 percent—on research and development.<sup>11</sup> Obviously that gave them a significant lead in the extent of their R&D on products for the civilian market.

#### **MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL-FINANCIAL COMPLEX**

The sinister role of munitions manufacturers became a major factor in 20th century monopoly capitalism.

The military-industrial complex—the operative economic and political alliance of the armament profiteers, their generals and admirals and political representatives—gained notoriety in World War I. It was Krupp, Flick, I.G. Farben and their bankers who were the financiers of the Hitler fascist-militarist dictatorship, whose aggressions culminated in World War II.

Out of that war a larger, more powerful and dangerous group emerged in the United States. The profiteering by the 1980s exceeded that during the war, when a larger proportion of the national income had been devoted to military purposes. At that time controls were tighter, and there were heavy excess profits taxes. But by the mid-'80s, most armament firms were paying little or no profit taxes whatsoever.

There have been strong ties between the Pentagon and the munitions companies. There has been a two-way flow of thousands of personnel between the ranks of the Pentagon bureaucracy and the corporate executive posts of

the armament contractors. Generals and lesser officers, retiring after only 20 years of service, have moved into lucrative munitions company posts or set up "consultantships" to arrange armament contracts for fee-paying corporations—all while collecting large "retirement" pensions. Most of the crucial cabinet members and White House functionaries in the Reagan Administration were former military officers, who on leaving the administration moved on to the corporate world—usually to concerns having substantial military business.

The *New York Times* editorialized under the heading "Close the Pentagon's Revolving Door":

The Pentagon auditor charged with keeping things honest at a Boeing plant retires. The next day he goes to work for Boeing. The test director of the Maverick missile retires. In a week, he's on the job at Hughes Aircraft, manufacturer of the Maverick. It's called the "revolving door," and its most worrisome feature is the cozy passage it creates from the Pentagon to contractors.<sup>12</sup>

The Pentagon has 150,000 "acquisition officers," the people who do the actual buying, deciding what to purchase and what prices to pay. For the most part they occupy an enviable position—being both sellers and buyers for "their" companies. Their only limitation is the amount of money each is awarded from the vast Pentagon grab bag. Naturally, the best procedure, from their real employer's viewpoint, is to pay as much as possible per item, providing the most profit out of the total purchases.

Over the ten-year period 1975-1984 the median rate of profit on equity capital of the 500 largest industrial corporations was 18.65 percent. The 500 corporations include 17 aerospace companies, which do mainly military business. Their median rate of profit was 26.76 percent per year.

The "Star Wars" program initiated in 1983 has not only been the most dangerous to world peace but the biggest source of profiteering, relatively, of any military program, because the wide-open research and experimental character of the contracts made it difficult to evaluate charges. Starting with a \$1 billion appropriation in 1984, the amount was scheduled to rise to \$7.3 billion in 1989. And this represented only the preliminary stages of what *Time* magazine called "The Star Wars Sweepstakes," explaining that (it) ". . . could ultimately cost anywhere from \$40

0 billion to \$1.2 trillion. It would thus become the biggest bonanza ever for American business and educational institutions."<sup>13</sup>

There is increasing overlapping between the dominant munitions firms and industrial monopolies as a whole. With the upsurge of military business and its incredible profitability, more and more corporations have been striving to make Pentagon business an important share of their conglomerations. As of the mid-1980s, half of the 100 largest industrial and transport companies were among the 100 largest Pentagon contractors; *while 23 of the top 25 armament contractors were among the 100 largest industrial concerns.*

Among the 100 largest arms merchants were the foremost corporations manufacturing heavy electrical equipment, electronics, computers, metals, chemicals, petroleum, and even tobacco products and broadcasting.

All these companies, with hundreds of millions and billions of Pentagon business, can throw their weight on the side of larger military budgets. Especially valuable are the R&D contracts. The \$645 million in R&D contracts granted General Electric in fiscal 1983 could have had great value in promoting the improvement and salability of its civilian airplane engines, as well as engines for the military planes. IBM's nearly \$300 million Pentagon R&D contracts doubtless helped it strengthen its decisive lead in the world computer market.

The integration of the munitions makers with the financial oligarchy has had even more impact. During the detente period of the 1970s, Lockheed Corporation was threatened with bankruptcy because the volume of profitable military business was insufficient to overcome its huge losses in the sale of civil aircraft. It was bailed out by the money-center banks, which thereby obtained a controlling interest in the company. Whereupon Lockheed virtually abandoned the civilian side of its business and has increasingly prospered, along with its banker backers, in U.S. and foreign military markets.

A more precise description of the military-industrial complex would be *military-industrial-financial complex*. As of early 1985, financial and related institutions held approximately 75 percent of the shares of Lockheed, 60 percent of Boeing, 55 percent of General Dynamics, 80 percent of McDonnell Douglas, and 55 percent of Rock-

well International and of United Technologies. Thus the banks derived substantial profits from acting as bankers for the munitions concerns.

Additional financial stakes from militarism include interest on the soaring national debt resulting from accelerated militarization of the economy, and the inordinate profits from foreign loans accruing from the expansion of U.S. capital behind the warships, guns, planes, bombs and occupation forces of the U.S. military and its selected puppet armies.

The munitions companies have had a direct interest in U.S. foreign policy, which has imposed and supported reactionary dictatorships and governments—such as Israel, Turkey and Pakistan—that have engaged in military intervention against neighbors. Foreign military sales by U.S. corporations under government-approved agreements exceeded \$20 billion in 1982 and remained very large thereafter.

In his first year in office, President Reagan declared that arms sales would be used as a tool of U.S. foreign policy. In 1985 the administration declared that no U.S. Government approval was needed for arms sales to allied countries, and in 1987 Secretary of State Shultz directed embassies to become, in effect, sales adjuncts of U.S. armament companies:

Posts hereafter should treat representatives of U.S. firms selling arms with the same courtesies as other U.S. businessmen, and may apply basic business information and services to them.<sup>14</sup>

Altogether, an important proportion of the major U.S. industrial and financial corporations have had a large profit stake in the inflated and expanding military budget. And added to these prime contractors are literally tens of thousands of subcontractors, many of whom have found that military orders have provided the difference between profitability and bankruptcy. This business has been carried on in every state, and in almost all congressional districts, and there has been competition between states and smaller areas over the placement of contracts and subcontracts. So thousands of capitalists have been ready to finance the election of members of Congress who have shown willingness to assist them in obtaining Pentagon business. Naturally members of Congress so elected, aware of their debt to such sponsors and wanting military contracts awarded "their way," have been under great

pressure to support higher military budgets and the aggressive foreign policy of the Administration. Thus it is possible to understand the power behind the drive for foreign and military policies that cannot be justified on "rational" or "humane" grounds—indeed, policies that are utterly irresponsible, a risk to all of humanity.

Militarization and wars have far-reaching economic effects aside from wartime destruction, death and long-lasting suffering. There is also the diversion to the military of resources needed to supply civilian goods and services.

However, there are offsetting benefits for the capitalists. In war or peace, sections of the capitalist class profit from armament orders. In periods of war or preparation for war—when public opinion can be directed against an actual or alleged enemy—chauvinism is stimulated in order to weaken and divide the working class and to mobilize sections of the middle classes, especially against workers fighting to defend their living standards.

In an actual war situation, when a country's full manpower and industrial resources are mobilized, monopoly capital as a whole profits greatly.

Sales of armaments, food and other goods to belligerents in World War I converted the United States from a debtor to a creditor nation. In World War II, the U.S. financial establishment cornered 70 percent of the world's gold reserves, and for a considerable period the dollar took over from gold as the main world monetary standard.

In World War II, the index of industrial production soared 118 percent between 1939 and 1944.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the industrial installations for nuclear bomb production, the basis was laid for the computer, radar and other electronic industries that have become major economic factors. The United States obtained a big lead in these new fields thanks to its favored location outside the war zones, its vast material reserves, and the large numbers of scientific and technical specialists available, including both Americans and refugees from Hitler.

For more than four decades the U.S. economy has been in an historically unprecedented situation—a prolonged period of high militarization without a major war. The economic impact of such a situation is quite different from that of an all-out war. Social scientists have exhaustively examined the economic impact of this state of af-

fairs, asking whether, on balance, it is "good" or "bad" for the economy. It is necessary to say that these authorities *have been asking the wrong question*. The determining question must be: *Who benefits and who loses?*

### LABOR LOSES

The top-heavy military budget has been promoted by the dominant sections of the capitalist class, which have profited enormously from it. The workers and farmers lost substantially—in political influence—as the rightward swing in power weakened the impact of organized labor on Washington's decisions. They have suffered a curtailment of hard-won social benefits, rising racism, and a widening gap between capitalist "haves" and working-class "have nots."

The militarization of the economy and the foreign policy accompanying it have been major factors enabling capital to make gains at the expense of labor. Protective labor legislation was circumvented, while anti-labor legislation, such as "right-to-work" laws was enacted.

The militarized economy, directly and indirectly, accelerated the undermining of major branches of basic industry and led to shifts in industrial relocation, foreign and domestic, that were harmful to American labor. The decisive military leadership of the United States among capitalist powers fostered the unprecedented export of capital by U.S. industrial firms.

In the United States, the South and the Southwest were the main locations of military bases and munitions plants. The military lobby, concentrated in these regions was crucial in securing "right-to-work" laws and in sustaining racial discrimination. Inevitably this weakened workers in standing up for their rights and their needs.

Claims that big armaments budgets were "good for the economy", despite their evasion of the class purposes and meanings of supposed benefits, must be analyzed.

To begin with, military labor—including production of munitions—is nonproductive labor. It channels part of the surplus value created by productive labor for nonproductive purposes and, when used, for destructive purposes.

However, because of the decay of capitalism and its inability under most conditions to utilize all its productive forces, the actual production of munitions is not physically at the expense of ci-

vilian output, nor is the employment of workers in the armed forces necessarily at the expense of their productive employment. In too many cases, they would simply be unemployed if not in the armed forces, a circumstance that explains the large numbers of Black enlistees.

The classic capitalist claim of the "merits" of military spending—and its overt anti-Sovietism—was expressed by *U.S. News & World Report* in May 1950:

Government planners figure they have found the magic formula for almost endless good times. They are now beginning to wonder if there may not be something to perpetual motion after all . . . *Cold War* is the catalyst. Cold war is an automatic pump primer.<sup>16</sup>

But this "formula" has had the same limitations as other versions of Keynesian economic stimulation through deficit government spending. It has not prevented cyclical crises and depressions. It has been inflationary. And it has had negative long-term economic and social effects. It has used for military purposes funds and resources that could otherwise have been used for constructive investment—government and private—and for social spending to improve mass living standards.

Aside from the two actual war periods, Korea and Vietnam, the four decades since 1946 have failed to reveal a consistent correlation between fluctuations in military spending and economic trends. The correlation was definitely negative during the Reagan Administration. Over the relevant cycle, from 1979 to 1986, the average rate of growth in "real" gross national product (gnp) was a meager 2.0 percent. And the buildup was punctuated by the most severe cyclical crisis since the 1930s, plus the ripening of another one.

Serious social scientists have shown that the impact of rising military spending has been negative during the cold war period, even according to the official criteria of economic growth rate—increase in employment, rate of growth of gnp, inflation, etc. Seymour Melman, Marion Anderson and Robert W. De LGrasse, Jr. have come to essentially the same conclusions.

The effect of military spending on employment has received much attention. In the past, the argument that "defense spending" creates jobs has been used to win the support of some workers, especially those whose jobs in part or in whole derived from military orders, for the for-

eign policies of Washington.

But the jobs resulting from military spending are far fewer than is implied by its supporters. Private industry employment derived from Pentagon business in 1986 was estimated at 1.6 million by civilian government agencies, and at 3.1 million by the Pentagon itself. Even the high figure represents only 3 percent of the total employed population, a very small result from the enormous expenditure involved.

In the 1980s the need to counter the negative economic impact of militarization was increasingly understood by U.S. workers and important sections of the trade union leadership. In particular, the International Association of Machinists (IAM), one of the large unions in heavy industry, with a goodly percentage of its workers in armament factories, concluded that its members on the whole were losers rather than gainers from military spending.

The Council on Economic Priorities prepared a detailed report for the IAM and for the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy on the negative economics of militarism. It concluded:

The economic consequences of buying more weaponry will be substantial. Jobs . . . investment, and economic growth will be sacrificed. Technological progress will be distorted. And social programs aimed at decreasing human suffering will be cut . . . Expanded military spending will not help solve our unemployment problem . . . Social costs will also be high.<sup>17</sup>

This report presented substantial evidence that the United States was losing ground to competitors in civilian activity because of its excessive allocation of capital and research to the military.

Significant changes in military spending would result in changes in employment:

- If armament spending were reduced, and there were no other changes in government spending or taxation, unemployment would temporarily increase. BUT

- If the reduction were of significant magnitude, especially through agreements lowering the war danger, the political climate would be conducive for conversion of military to civilian production and for implementation of government programs providing more and better jobs; and that would mean an increase in employment.

- Short of a major war, increased military spending in a period of reaction and anti-labor

offensive usually results in a net drop in employment relative to the growth of the labor force.

• In the final analysis, the *trends* in both military spending and employment depend on the strength and influence of labor and peace forces.

Since the economic motivations for the military budget are closely interrelated with the military-political goals of world domination, they counter general welfare goals. The purpose of militarization is not to improve the economy "in general," but to provide profits and power for the capitalist class, especially for the dominant financial-industrial-militarist-transnational groups. Similarly, the chauvinistic fervor of propaganda disseminated by the White House and the media is designed to inculcate a willingness on the part of the masses to accept "austerity" and "sacrifices" in order to provide for the "vital interests" of the United States.

The absurdity of the attempt to cripple the USSR economically through military spending has been established by the entire postwar experience. The Soviet Union has not only gained substantially on the United States in relative economic and technical economic status, but has achieved full strategic military equality with the United States at the same time.

#### SUMMARY

Along with the militarized economy of the United States—and in part as specific results of its class objectives—have been these consequences:

1 □ A slowdown of scientific and technical progress for social uses, because R&D expenditures have been concentrated on military ends.

2 □ A curtailment of government spending for social benefits because of the competition of the military for funds.

3 □ A reduction in net capital investment, relative to other countries, because of the larger share of capital goods going for military purposes.

4 □ The inflationary effect of the higher interest rates resulting from budget deficits caused by high and rising military spending.

5 □ A relative and, in many cases, absolute

decline in domestic industrial production because U.S. firms shifted output to their foreign plants in countries where U.S. military power has provided protection from people's liberation struggles.

6 □ A geographical shift in economic activity as a result of the concentration of military production and bases in certain areas and because of the varied industrial composition of military production.

7 □ The temporary weakening of labor in relation to capital aggressiveness, contributing to the relative, and later absolute, deterioration in the overall economic and social conditions of the working class.

8 □ The increase in racial discrimination, resulting from the pressures of rising unemployment and the chauvinism associated with imperialist expansionism.

9 □ A decline in the relative position of the United States in the world economy, including the relative power of the U.S. financial and industrial monopolies.

#### Notes

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# Reconstruction: A Monumental New Study

HERBERT APTHEKER

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Eric Foner, *Reconstruction; America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. (New American Nation Studies, edited by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris), New York: Harper and Row, 1988, 690 pp., illustrated, \$29.95.

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This book is a result of nine years of work. Libraries, editors, research assistants and friends assisted. Helpful grants came from the National Endowment for the Humanities and from the City University of New York and Columbia University where the author teaches. It was all worthwhile; Eric Foner has produced a monumental volume, worthy of any prize the historical profession and the world of scholarship can bestow.

It is not helped, however, by a one-page preface signed by the distinguished editors of the series to which the book belongs; in that single page, William James is William Jones, John W. Burgess is John Burggs and DuBois' initials are misrendered. A new printing—which surely will be required soon—should rectify this unfortunate opening.

Happily the text itself is rarely blemished by such technical mistakes and its content is of a very high order.

The book examines that crucial era in U.S. history from the closing years of the Civil War—when the turn was made transforming that war from one to save the Union into one terminating slavery (and thereby saving the Union)—until the last remnant of Radical Reconstruction was betrayed with the infamous deal between Democrats and Republicans resulting in the inauguration of Rutherford B. Hayes as President.

Toward the close of this book, Foner quotes John R. Lynch—himself a Black member of the Mississippi Reconstruction legislature, and a leading figure in contesting the Bourbon ver-

sion of that era—as writing in 1917 that he hoped a “fair, just and impartial historian will some day write a history covering the Reconstruction period [giving] the actual facts of what took place.” Lynch himself, in writings published between 1917 and 1931 did much toward this end and Foner, of course, calls attention to this. It may be said that Eric Foner here fulfills Lynch's hope.

Meanwhile, as Lynch knew in 1917, W.E.B. DuBois, in the midst of historic labor, was also engaged in just such an enterprise. In the study of the “Freedmen's bureau” published in the *Atlantic Monthly* (March, 1901), he had projected elements of his thesis. In December, 1909, Du Bois gave his second (and last) paper before the American Historical Association; it was entitled “Reconstruction and its Benefits” and was published in the *American Historical Review* in July, 1910. but neither the 1909 event nor the 1910 publication seems to have penetrated the minds of the then solidly white Association.

There was, however, widespread ferment on this question in the Black world—the Lynch and Du Bois publications reflected and stimulated that ferment. Indeed, as early as 1899, John L. Love had published, through the American Negro Academy, a smashing attack upon *The Disfranchisement of the Negro*, which included a defense of the Reconstruction. The great writer, Charles W. Chestnutt, in a 1903 essay with the same title, also published a very powerful assault upon the pro-Bourbon version of Reconstruction.

Leaders of the Niagra Movement pressured Du Bois to produce a full-length refutation of these falsifications. It may be added that Bulletin No. 1 (1915) of the fledgling NAACP was an excellent analysis of *Reconstruction and the Ku Klux Klan in South Carolina*, authored by the much-neglected Martha Gruening.

This was part of a response to the viciousness represented by the film *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and U.B. Phillip's influential defense of

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slavery published in 1918. Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, itself founded in 1915, began refutations of the Dixiecrat garbage on Reconstruction in the earliest issues of its *Journal*. Also, through that Association, appeared the studies of Reconstruction in South Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee by Alrutheus A. Taylor of Fisk University.

This background is indicative of the forces impelling Du Bois to produce in 1935 his magnum opus, *Black Reconstruction*. The year is significant for it is the period of the New Deal; this helps account for its publication by a major house (Harcourt, Brace) and the profound impact the book had on contemporaries (including Eleanor Roosevelt).

Eric Foner, in paying proper tribute to Du Bois's seminal volume, writes that "at the time" of its publication "it was largely ignored." This is a serious, though common, error. It is true that the main organ of the historical profession (then altogether racist), the *American Historical Review*, did not review *Black Reconstruction*, but the larger community outside certainly did. This included, of course, the entire Black press and academic personnel; it also included all the leading (white) newspapers and magazines of the time. Most of them recognized the pioneering qualities of the book and evaluated it positively, often enthusiastically. There even was some serious notice of the volume by influential white academicians, including Benjamin B. Kendrick of the University of North Carolina, Robert H. Woody of Duke, Crane Brinton of Harvard and William MacDonald of Brown.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this, it remains true, as Foner writes, that the Bourbon version of Reconstruction (developed in the first two decades of the 20th century) "was accorded scholarly legitimacy—to its everlasting shame—by the nation's fraternity of [white, mainstream] professional historians."

Du Bois, in the final chapter of *Black Reconstruction*, observed that in its preparation he had "not time and money and opportunity to go back to the original sources"; he mentions in particular several collections of papers that obviously were of great consequence but again notes that he had "not the time nor opportunity to examine these." In the years that Du Bois devoted directly to the production of this manuscript, his funding always was paltry, his other duties were very strenuous and—in any case—his complexion

barred him, then, from the use of many archival collections!

Now, Eric Foner, at the height of his powers, favored with great opportunity and significant funding and assistance—and finding all depositories open—has been able to stand on the shoulders of those who preceded him—in the first place, Du Bois—and to produce this first-rate study. It not only is grounded upon exhaustive archival work, but also shows examination of nearly all the vast scholarship in this field produced in the half century since Du Bois' book appeared.

Foner's basic aim is to "provide . . . a coherent, comprehensive modern account of Reconstruction"; or, he writes further on, "to view the period as a whole, integrating the social, political and economic aspects of Reconstruction into a coherent, analytical narrative." Overall, he views Reconstruction as "the beginning of an extended historical process: the adjustment of American society to the end of slavery."

I suggest that such a view of Reconstruction is partial and tends to minimize the dynamics of that process. I think Reconstruction is better understood as the continuation—on a higher level—of the popular and class struggles that characterized Southern history from the beginning of the eighteenth century. I believe that the slaveowners' choice of secession and counter-revolution reflected, in considerable part, desperation due to the mounting challenge to their rule not only on the national scene *but also at home*.

In that sense, the Civil War in the South, as well as in its federal conduct, represented a qualitative *extension* of the main features of ante-bellum Southern history. The indispensable and decisive contribution of the Afro-American millions to the defeat of the slaveholders' oligarchy was in line with the basic character of the slaves' (and free Blacks') challenge to slavocratic rule which was fundamental to the years prior to 1861—especially from 1820 on.

In this way, too, I believe, one can better understand the dimensions of the *struggle* which is Reconstruction, the *temporary* victory of reaction and the continual challenge to that victory which went on despite the betrayal leading to Hayes' ascendancy.

One of the strongest features of Foner's book

is its vivid depiction of the murderous character of Bourbon reaction. He demonstrates the ruthlessness of the new ruling class (the industrial bourgeoisie and their junior partners, the planters) in suppressing Black strivings for freedom, the Native American People's resistance to genocide, and the farmers' and workers' (Black and white) battles for equity.

The dynamic of this, the interconnectedness of the process and its ongoing nature, however, is diminished when the story of Reconstruction is viewed as "the adjustment of American society to the end of slavery."

The great accomplishment of Foner in this work is that he does offer the reader an overall view of the years from 1863 through 1877, in the South in the first place, but also in the nation as a whole. His book is "a coherent, analytical narrative," skilfully written and often—given the dramatic content—very moving.

He means to elucidate five themes: 1) the "centrality of the black experience"; 2) the manner in which Southern society "was remodeled"; 3) in this connection, especially to illuminate "patterns of race relations" and the "complex interconnection of race and class in the postwar South"; 4) the transformation of the Federal state into a more fully national one with enhanced powers and with "an unprecedented commitment to the ideal of a national citizenship whose equal rights belonged to all Americans regardless of race"; and, 5) how the changes in the "economy and class structure of the North affected Reconstruction."

Each of these five main categories is handled successfully. The work is, I repeat, especially significant in conveying the awful character of racist counter-revolution, with thousands slaughtered, tens of thousands injured, women violated, and schools and churches destroyed. The failure of the Federal government to effectively suppress this ruthlessness is part of its failure to seek the true transformation of Southern society.

This book is very full on the changes actually accomplished by Radical Reconstruction in those states it briefly controlled: tax revision, significant democratization of the apparatus, free public education begun, aspects of racist conduct outlawed, rights of workers enhanced, the position of women improved, instituting social programs to assist the disabled. Much of this was in

Du Bois's book but here it is fuller and its documentation is valuable. Consequential is Foner's persuasive demonstration of the united Black-white nature of Radical Reconstruction.

The national scene—the Great Depression starting in 1873 and its impact on Reconstruction, the beginning of monopoly capitalism, the conquest of the West, the development of a massive and militant working class—and the relationship of such developments to the Republican Party and its attitude toward Reconstruction, are well handled. The vast corruption accompanying this capitalist development—overshadowing that marking Reconstruction (which itself has similar sources)—again is done with a completeness that could not be expected of the Du Bois classic.

The significance of the Civil War amendments is illuminated. In this connection, the rejection of the thesis argued by Raoul Berger (and echoed by Attorney General Meese) also is persuasive, although the degree of outright falsification in Berger's work is not indicated.<sup>2</sup>

In this connection, a salient feature of the XIV Amendment is overlooked in Foner's book as it generally is in the literature as a whole. That Amendment not only nationalized citizenship and federalized the application of the Bill of Rights; it also specifically forbade compensation to slaveholders (including those who had been loyal to the Union) for their loss of property in slaves. This made universal the property confiscation in the XIII Amendment and based such confiscation not on treason but on the impermissibility of such "property" as human beings. The precedent, here, should future generations find it wise and necessary to confiscate other forms of private property, is clear.

This brings me to my sense of the main inadequacy of the Foner volume: it never does fully explain why Radical Reconstruction was abandoned by the Republican Party. The book does show elements leading to this betrayal but it does not face this key question frontally and does not offer any analysis of it, rather than a description of accompanying features.

I have in mind the fact that without satisfying the Southern masses' (especially but not exclusively the former slaves') fundamental need (and demand), namely, confiscation of the planters' land and its distribution to the landless, freedom would be fatally incomplete and political power could not be retained by the Bourbons'

victims.

This is the time when the growing Northern bourgeoisie is taking over the national market and the nation's resources; it is not about to permit distribution of the South's wealth to those whose labor created it. Furthermore, such an assault upon the sanctity of contract and the invincibility of private property—if permitted in the South—clearly would challenge such relationships outside the South. (This was a fundamental component of the slaveowners' argument against Abolitionism.) There are, in Foner's book, from time to time, the elements of this reality but it never does bring all this together analytically and thus tell the reader why—in the most fundamental sense—Radical Reconstruction was strangled, to the averted eyes or even the commendation of the bourgeoisie, including its President and its press.

Overall, Eric Foner's *Reconstruction* is a masterpiece. It is required, and exciting, reading for all who would understand a central component of this nation's past and thereby help gain a deeper comprehension of the United States today. □

#### Notes

1. The background and reception of *Black Reconstruction* is in my introduction to that book in the *Complete Published Writings of Du Bois*, Kraus-Thompson, New York, 1976, pp. 5-56. It does not appear that Foner used this source.
2. Raoul Berger, *Government by Judiciary: The Transformation of the Fourteenth Amendment*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1977. See Foner's *Reconstruction*, p. 257. A further critique of Berger is in my *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement*, Twayne Publishers, Boston, (forthcoming).

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