

THE GUARDIAN SUSTAINER

DECEMBER
1976

monthly
publication for
members of the
Guardian
Sustainer
program

FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Moving forward with a broader Guardian

By JACK A. SMITH

Let's sum up a little as 1976 draws to a close.

It's been a good year for the Guardian in many ways. This doesn't mean it was an easy year—far from it—but generally favorable.

Politically, it demonstrated once again that we mean what we say about being independent. Our understanding about Angola led inevitably toward a measured critique of China's foreign policy and our independent evaluation of the current campaign against the "gang of four."

Had we done otherwise—and there were considerable pressures on us in this regard—we might well have given up our role as a credible Marxist-Leninist publication that at the same time attempts to speak to the broad progressive forces in the U.S.

We think our stance on Angola, China's foreign policy and the "gang of four" has been a positive contribution toward the development of political consciousness in our country and has cleared away some obstacles in the path of independent Marxist-Leninists who seek the ideological clarity required to move ahead with efforts to transform the independent M-L trend into an organizational form.

BROADENING APPEAL

Our articles on study groups and party-building have likewise been a contribution which will increase in the next year. At the same time, as we prepare for our supplement on party-building, I would like to assure you that the Guardian is very conscious of the danger of sectarianism and of appealing to only a small number of people. Thus, as we get ready to play a larger role in helping to propel forward the party-building movement, our plans are to broaden—not narrow—the Guardian's appeal.

It would be a big mistake for us to do a very good job in helping the party-building forces by publishing news, theories, suggestions and polemics about the Marxist-Leninist left while neglecting our broader range of progressive readers and potential readers.

For every step we take in devoting space

to issues of concern to the M-L movement we plan to take a comparable step in providing material for the anti-imperialist and progressive movement in general.

I'd like to see the Guardian in the next year really make big advances in broadening and deepening its news coverage and analysis, doing a better job of providing the nuts and bolts information that left people in general find so valuable about the paper—including our many readers who do not completely agree with us politically but find the Guardian to be an invaluable resource of material they require to comprehend the world.

We've got to walk on two feet. Just as it would be wrong for the paper to concentrate on relating the news only, without regard to playing a political role, it would be wrong to concentrate on playing a political role only, without regard to—or reducing our obligation to—relate the news in the best and most professional way possible.

We want to service not only those who have advanced Marxist-Leninist political consciousness but also those who have not yet reached this point—and the only way to do this is to continually strive to provide a better and better publication.

Our plans for the new year call for all around improvements in our breadth of news coverage and quality of coverage. In this way we'll be able to increase our contribution to the M-L movement without becoming sectarian or narrowing our appeal. Indeed—and we think it can be done—our plan is to expand our general readership at precisely the moment when our political approach grows sharper and more specific.

BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

Our biggest accomplishment in 1976—expansion and broadening the paper—was a conscious step in this direction. According to everyone who's been in touch with us it was a success.

Over and over readers have told us—despite their disagreements with this or that and our obvious shortcomings—that the Guardian is a much better paper today than it was before the expansion. The increase to 24 pages plus the expansion of our coverage in general combined with our reaffirmation

of political independence has gained the paper more friends and closer ties with many organizations and groups. This is especially true of third world groups and liberation support movements in this country.

It took us several months after we went to 24 pages to organize sufficient input of materials to feel confident we were publishing high quality material, but it's now reached the point where we could put out 28 pages a week without resorting to "filler" material.

Our bureau system, which is key to having a well-rounded paper, improved during the year and the amount of on-the-spot articles has never been greater. Developing more bureaus next year is one of our priorities.

We had a little trouble at first getting sufficient articles for our back-of-the-paper section of commentary and cultural coverage but our problem now is lack of space for the many contributions we're receiving. All of us would like to increase the commentary-cultural section but we do not want this to be at the expense of our foreign and domestic news coverage, which is also competing for more space. The answer is more pages—but we're not ready to propose this.

Expanding the paper and sharpening its political line is the product of one of the best staffs the paper has had in its history—not the most experienced or "professional" but enthusiastic, hard working and politically dedicated. Our weekly study group will iron out the problem of different political levels and the week-to-week experience of production will improve people's skills. It is also one of the most ideologically united staffs.

Internally, one of our biggest accomplishments during the year has been the great increase in the number of women members of our Guardian cooperative. This has directly improved the paper politically and productively. Our two principal editors, foreign and domestic, are women, as is our general manager. Of our 10-person editorial staff in New York, five are men, five are women. Two are Black.

Off the staff, more and more of our writers in the bureaus or stringers are women also, including writers of foreign news—a field

Continued on next page

Summing up a most eventful year

By IRWIN SILBER

When the temperature gets down to 15 degrees and the wind starts howling through the caverns of 17th Street, you don't need a calendar to tell you that another year is coming to a close.

And quite a year it has been! Internationally, the year's top headlines remind us how significant developments in the third world have become. The focus of the world anti-imperialist struggle—for nearly a decade in Indochina—has dramatically shifted to Southern Africa.

As the Guardian correctly pointed out a year ago, Angola was the opening battle in the struggle for all of southern Africa. The victory of the MPLA in Angola intensified all of the contradictions in southern Africa. In both Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Namibia, the plight of the settler regimes and their South African and U.S. backers is so desperate that they are belatedly scrambling to concoct neocolonialist "solutions" for themselves.

REPLAY OF ANGOLA?

In Zimbabwe, a replay of the Angola script may be in the works. While Washington and Pretoria madly search for some black figure or force who would serve their interests to "share" power with the Salisbury regime, the liberation fighters are going ahead with their preparations for guerrilla war—understanding that the freedom for which they have struggled for so long will not be blithely turned over to them by the racist Ian Smith government. The Soviets and some East European countries are supplying military aid—although how much no one can say for sure. When the Geneva negotiations collapse and the fighting intensifies, we can anticipate the imperialist propaganda barrage that will follow.

The bourgeois press will howl about "race war"—as though the colonial repression of Black Africa, the imposition of minority white settler regimes and the apartheid system do not constitute a "race war." And since imperialism never fights to protect markets, puppet regimes, access to natural resources or multibillion dollar investments, we can also expect to hear terrible moanings about the "Soviet menace" in Africa. Let us hope that those who stumbled so badly on the question of supporting Angola a year ago will not make the same mistake in Zimbabwe.

CHINESE SITUATION

The year has been noteworthy too for the passing of two giant figures of the Chinese Revolution—Mao Tsetung and Chou En-lai. Clearly the current struggle in China is directly connected to the deaths of these two men who between them represented the dialectical unity of Chinese socialism as expressed in the slogan: "Grasp revolution; promote production." Certainly the campaign being waged against the

"gang of four" with its sexist overtones (directed against Chiang Ching) and somewhat labored interpretations of past polemics is not confidence-inspiring. At the same time, it appears as though a much-needed corrective against a "left-dogmatist" tendency has been instituted. The question is: how far to the right will the new party leadership veer? Events to date have not yet answered that question. One would feel more confident of the current changes in China if there were any indications of a rethinking of those foreign policy stands which have submerged third world struggles into the view that superpower contention is the principal question everywhere and that the main blow must be directed at the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, as recent Chinese positions in the UN on both Angola and Chile have indicated, this is not the case.

The other major development internationally took place in the Middle East where, it must be conceded, the Palestinian liberation forces have suffered a setback. Syria's intervention in Lebanon salvaged the weakened rightist forces and made the PLO more susceptible to Syrian political pressure. It seems apparent that some of the Arab states plan to test the seriousness of U.S. intentions by making possible a package deal that would end Israeli occupation of the Arab territories, establish a Palestinian national identity (of sorts) and accept Israeli sovereignty up to the 1967 borders. If the U.S. cannot force Israel to accept such a deal, a new Mideast war is a certainty.

CAPITALISM IN DECAY

The two most significant developments on the U.S. "home front" have been the weakness of the economic "recovery" and the acceleration of officially sanctioned racist attacks by the bourgeois state apparatus. With many of the worst effects of the recession still unchecked—high unemployment in general and massive unemployment among Blacks (particularly youth) and other national minorities, increasing cutbacks in elementary social services and a decline in workers' purchasing power—the "recovery" may be sputtering to an end. True, the final verdict isn't in yet, but one thing seems certain: the U.S. monopoly capitalist economy is not going to "recover" to where it was before the recent recession began. At the peak of any renewed "recovery," unemployment will still be high (6% or so) and the rate of inflation will outpace that of the sixties. In addition, the trends in the direction of increasing capital concentration and state monopoly capitalism are bound to continue.

The rising violence and legal attacks against minority peoples in the U.S. is perhaps the most ominous sign on the horizon. Increasingly, Blacks, Latins and

Native Americans are being set up as the scapegoats for the accelerating decay of U.S. society—a decay that is the inexorable expression of the irreversible crisis of monopoly capitalism. What is especially alarming is the active role in this racist assault being played by the police, the courts, the prisons and other institutions of the state apparatus—in addition to an increase in vigilante violence. This is the political and ideological preparation for fascism.

TURNING POINT FOR LEFT

In another sense, the economic attacks on the working class and the racist attacks on the nationally oppressed point out most graphically the material basis for that united front against imperialism that can be built in the U.S.—an alliance whose cornerstone can only be the solidarity of the multinational working class with the oppressed nationalities.

Which brings us to the subjective factor—the left. It has been an interesting and—I am convinced—what will prove to be a turning-point year for the left in general and for Marxist-Leninists in particular. The bitter ideological struggle over international line—while taxing and, in some respects, disheartening—has cleared the way for a positive and conscious move on the path to building a new communist party.

Early in the new year, the Guardian will be addressing this question with a major statement. We believe the time has come when a breakthrough on the party-building question can be made. My present series of columns (Fan the Flames) on party-building is an attempt to finally settle certain questions which continue to linger on from earlier periods—to clear the decks, so to speak, for Marxist-Leninists to take the next step. That step will hardly resolve all questions. Far from it. But it can be, as the Chinese say, the first step on a journey of a thousand miles. Quantitatively, that step may not appear to be any different from the tens of thousands of others that must follow. But sometimes that first step—or the willingness to take it and start down that long path—can be the most difficult.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

So we will be devoting much time, space and thought to this matter in the new year. We believe this is something that you the readers and supporters of the Guardian want us to do. And for a great variety of reasons—ranging from the interest the ruling class will have in this process to undoubted hostility from some on the left, and including the price that must be paid to maintain our political independence both nationally and internationally—we will need the help of you, the Guardian Sustainers, more than ever.

Forward with a broader paper

Continued from preceding page

whether in the left or bourgeois press, generally dominated by men. In our Dec. 8 issue, for instance, pages 14, 15, 16 and 17 of our foreign news section contain the bylines of six different women writers. We plan to encourage the development of more women and third world writers in the next year.

CIRCULATION UP

As a result of the expansion and technical and political improvements in the paper, our circulation continued its slow but steady climb upward in 1976. One of our biggest problems is that we did not devote nearly as much time to circulation-building as we did to making a better paper. We lost the opportunity to maximize the benefits from expanding the Guardian by not investing adequate efforts and money into a major circulation drive. We're giving consideration to this for the new year—but it's still a problem for us and solutions aren't easy. Most of our circulation increases are still from word-of-mouth advertising.

One of our biggest successes in 1976 was the increase in our Sustainer system. We don't divulge figures on this for security reasons, but there are more Sustainers today than ever before—a lot more.

Despite continued gains in 1976 and the expectation of further improvements in the new year, we face one very big problem that could cause great damage. For various reasons, we anticipate having a very tough time of it economically. Inflation is a big factor—but the biggest has to do with our political independence. Let's just say we're paying a very high price for our independence.

At the moment our Coordinating Committee, staff and close friends are trying to work out some solutions to this impending problem. Ironically, just at the time when our popularity and influence is heading toward a high point, we're being forced to consider cutbacks and other schemes to make ends meet. The problem is a lot more severe than I've let on. We're working on some plans and in the next Guardian Sustainer I'll be able to say more.

The Guardian is used to living with adversity and I'm sure that with your help we'll get by. And we're not going to lower our sights. On to 1977—with a better and broader paper and some advances in helping to build the party!

The Guardian Sustainer is published monthly for members of the Sustainer program of the Guardian independent, radical newsweekly. All correspondence should be addressed to The Guardian Sustainer, 33 West 17th St., New York, N.Y. 10011.



Guardian news editor Barbara Miner.

News editor Barbara Miner

Virtually every domestic news story and feature in the Guardian was read first and shaped into form by Barbara Miner, the paper's news editor.

Sitting hunched behind a desk in New York a ridiculous number of hours a week isn't Miner's conception of fun—she prefers the out of doors and physical activity—but it's her political work and she does it with a fierce determination.

Miner, 25, came to the Guardian last May. Her previous journalistic experience was at the University of Wisconsin's Daily Cardinal. Beginning as a reporter, she was moved to the news editor's desk a couple of months later so that Karen Gellen could take over as foreign editor. Although she continues to write the State and the People column and some news articles, she misses handling the major writing assignments there's no time for now.

She brings to the job a sharp political eye—a news editor's principal task—good editing skills and a team spirit combined with a nonsectarian and broad approach to what constitutes "news" for a paper like the Guardian.

"Although I've only been here six or seven months," she says, "it seems longer. I've learned so much, from the details of copy-editing to the larger issues that make the Guardian more than just a good newspaper.

"More than anything, I've learned that the Guardian is much more than a sum of its parts. Its experience is stronger and deeper than of any one person here. The weekly paper is better than any one article. Our responsibilities are to more than those who are our ardent supporters.

"I have confidence in the paper—as do the rest of the staff. If we didn't, there's no way we could work the hours we do—for a below minimum wage salary. But the real paycheck is every Thursday morning when we see another good Guardian come off the presses, knowing that it strengthens the people's movement and weakens the class enemy."

Letters from our Sustainers

This space in *The Guardian* Sustainers will be reserved for your letters every month. Try to keep them as brief as possible. All letters will be printed with the author's initials but you must send in the communication with your full name.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

W.A., New York City: I was quite disappointed that the Guardian did not participate in the conference on the international situation which was initiated by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and held in New York Nov. 20. While the vast majority of those present were RCP supporters, there was a definite section of the audience that was open to the Guardian's views. More to the point, here was a forum for the Guardian to present its line in a debate with two lines that need to be refuted: the openly class-collaborationist position advocated by William Hinton (and despite some slight differences by the October League as well), and the revolutionary-sounding position of the RCP, which is really fence straddling. (They claim they oppose U.S. imperialism, but fail to support the legitimate national liberation struggle of the Angolan people and echo the imperialists' slanders of Cuba).

The Guardian's presence would have demonstrated the hypocrisy of the RCP position, and would have brought out the full implications of Hinton's position.

I don't know what your reasons were for not participating, but I feel you probably made a mistake. The Guardian should not hesitate to put forward its line even in a hostile environment, for it is a correct line, and is strong enough to prevail. It is our duty to point out the need for real proletarian internationalism, especially to those who are under the influence of class-collaborationist ideas.

The Guardian replies: Several people have asked why we did not participate, although we had been invited to do so. Our decision not to participate was based on two main considerations:

1. The conference itself did not come close to representing in a fully meaningful way the broad spectrum of views that would have engendered a fruitful discussion of the questions.

2. The conference was clearly under the organizational control of one particular tendency as represented by the RCP. Our own experiences with the RCP (and the RU before that) are such that we cannot have confidence in any such undertaking where its hegemony is so apparent.

The Guardian is willing to take part in any such discussion provided the various political tendencies involved exercise actual organizational control over the gathering. This would mean, in effect, that each political tendency would have an equal say in all decisions affecting such matters as speakers, workshops, rules for debate, order

of speakers, publicity, etc. These conditions clearly did not prevail in the conference held Nov. 20.

STYLE

E.N., Chicago: I'd like to echo those who lately have criticized the Guardian for not speaking to the working class, particularly in regard to the educational level and fund of knowledge needed to read the paper. I read your article about "In These Times" but think it is premature to criticize it so scathingly before it starts publication. It has been my experience that the social-democratic groups and sometimes the "milder" Trotskyist ones like International Socialists have spoken most clearly to the everyday needs of working people. This is of course partly due to their political errors (economism, etc.) but also because they seem to perceive where nonleft people's heads are at.

This involves the most serious problem of deciding who your audience is. Almost every media review Irwin Silber writes begins with a statement about the alienation of the bourgeois intellectual. Who appreciates this—working people or ex-petty-bourgeois communists, who are perhaps in danger of reverting to bourgeois lifestyles themselves?

Not that I personally don't find his insights valuable. But it seems to me symptomatic of the Guardian's indirection at this point. You must decide whether you want to continue being, and become better at being, a spokesman for intellectuals and M-L organizers. This would involve improving your M-L education and analysis, working on answering questions of how revolution is to be made, how to party-build etc. In short, an Iskra-type paper. The other direction I think involves much more massive changes—becoming a mass, readable Marxist paper for the people—which would require enormous changes in style, focus, content. Perhaps this is the type of paper that a party would be in a better position to publish.

Finally, I think a lot of and need the Guardian as a counterweight to the misinformation and paranoid style of other left papers. Your China coverage has been excellent and intelligent. Keep it up!

CHINA

E.C., New York City: I go along with the thesis that the Guardian has put forward on the "gang of four" ouster in China. But I'm beginning to worry about how far China will take the anti-"left" campaign. I can agree that it is the center forces of the party—rather than the right—that have won out in the struggle against left dogmatism. But I think a crucial question for the future will be whether Chairman Hua and the party center are right centrists or left centrists.

One thing all of the current top leaders of China seem to have in common is their position during the cultural revolution. They were neither initiators nor targets of it.

The ideological path that was embarked upon with the cultural revolution is the key to understanding the current events, I believe. The "gang of four" comprised the top leadership of the cultural revolution, along with Mao Tsetung. I think it is becoming clearer that Mao's line, represented by the cultural revolution, was in a minority within the Communist Party and was never able to completely prevail. Only the neutrality of the party center during the cultural revolution, and a left-center alliance in the wake of it succeeded in preserving the political essence of that most crucial event.

Now, everything is being moved over one notch. Instead of a left-center alliance, there is a center-right alliance. And it appears that the forces that would balance such a right-center formation are nowhere to be found.

I hope the Chinese, in fighting left dogmatism, do not indict the cultural revolution as well. For all its shortcomings, it was one of the most important events in the history of the world communist movement.

Can you pledge more?

It's nearing the first of the year—time for many of you to renew your pledges to the Guardian Sustainers program. We want to thank you for giving us that support that makes it possible for us to continue. Most Sustainers are not wealthy and we know it's not easy to send money to the Guardian after paying all those monthly bills.

The Guardian has monthly bills, too, and like yours, ours are growing. We need your extra help if we are to keep up. How about increasing your pledge? Instead of sending a check for \$60, can you make it \$75? \$100? Or instead of \$5 a month, how about \$10?

These are hard times for all of us. That's why we need you to give a little more to keep us going. For our part, we'll continue to improve the Guardian in every way we can. Hope you all enjoy the holidays.

—Bill Ryan