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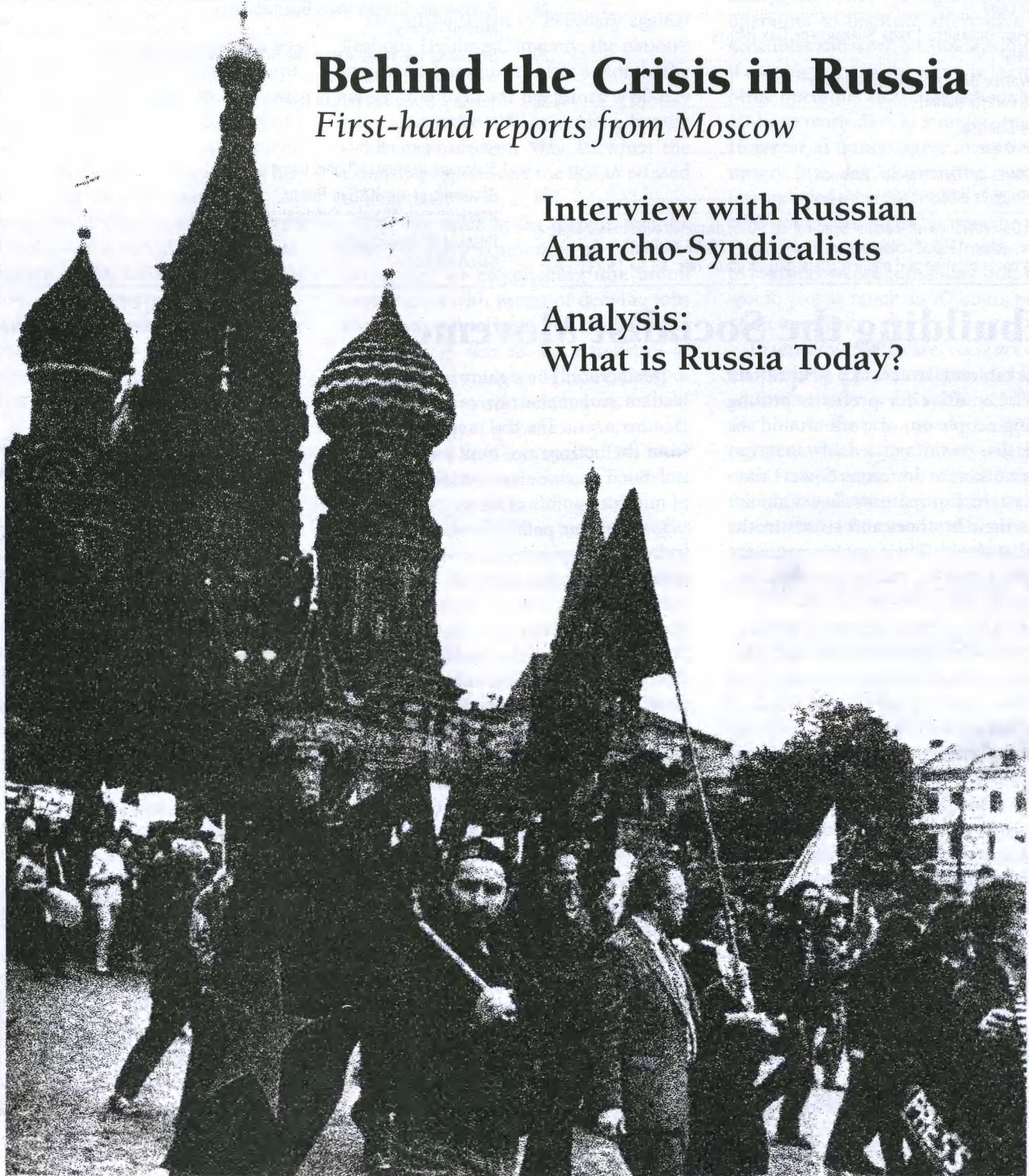
Number 5 Winter 1994

Behind the Crisis in Russia

First-hand reports from Moscow

Interview with Russian
Anarcho-Syndicalists

Analysis:
What is Russia Today?



CONTENTS

COAL STRIKE ENDS WITH VICTORY FOR MINERS
Suzanne Forsyth Doran..... 3

MAJOR SHAKEUP AT UNITED AIRLINES
Carl Finamore..... 4

DO WORKERS REALLY SAVE THEIR JOBS WITH AN ESOP?
Malik Miah and Rich Lesnik..... 4

BEHIND THE CHICAGO SCHOOL CRISIS
Lee Artz..... 7

CALIFORNIA SINGLE PAYER INITIATIVE FILED AT STATE HOUSE
Alan Hanger..... 26

SEXUAL HARASSMENT RULING: A MAJOR VICTORY FOR WOMEN
Caroline Lund..... 28

DEVELOPING ORGANIZED LABOR SUPPORT FOR GAY RIGHTS
Tasso Geist..... 29

ASIAN WOMEN BATTLE GARMENT INDUSTRY
Suzanne Forsyth Doran..... 30

CHARLES CURTISS
Kathleen O'Nan..... 31

HATE CRIMES IN "DEMOCRATIC" AMERICA
Book Review by Hayden Perry..... 32

COVER: Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (KAS) demonstration in Red Square, Moscow—May, 1990. Photographer: Vlad Tupikin. PRICE CHANGE: Now \$2 per issue to cover printing and mailing costs. Subscription rate: \$8 for four issues.

FEATURE SECTION: CRISIS IN RUSSIA

FOCUS ON RUSSIA
Alex Chis..... 8

VOTERS REJECT YELTSIN'S SHOCK THERAPY
Renfrey Clarke..... 8

WHAT IS RUSSIA TODAY?
Barry Sheppard..... 9

THE BACKGROUND TO YELTSIN'S "DEMOCRACY"
Renfrey Clarke..... 11

ETHNIC CLEANSING A LA RUSSE
Laure Akai..... 13

RUSSIAN AND GERMAN NAZIS BUILDING LINKS
Mikhail Tsovma..... 14

SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT THE RUSSIAN WORKERS' MOVEMENT
Alex Chis..... 15

TAKING A STAND FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
Alex Chis..... 16

SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS
Statement by Human Rights Committee..... 17

BEGINNING OF THE KAS IN RUSSIA
Interview with Anarcho-Syndicalists..... 18

RUSSIAN WOMEN BEWARE!
Claudette Bégin..... 25

Rebuilding the Socialist Movement

Workers and farmers face an uncertain future. The drive for profits is putting working people out of work around the world.

The workers in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe now face a similar fate as their brothers and sisters in the capitalist world. Their governments are both pro-capitalist and anti-communist. Few voices are defending socialism.

In the United States, as in all advanced capitalist countries, employer and government attacks fall disproportionately on the discriminated oppressed people of color, women and youth.

Only a consciously organized and militant response can defend the oppressed and exploited, here and abroad. The key to bring about fundamental change is mass mobilization and leadership by working people around three basic ideas: *solidarity, democracy and independent political action.*

Solidarity: Active support of the democratic rights of people of color, women, youth, the disabled, gays and other victims and outcasts of society. Solidarity means complete support to national liberation struggles from Asia, Africa, the Pacific to the Americas and Europe.

Democracy: The right to pick our own leaders and make our own decisions. Democracy means the majority rules—from the bottom up, rank and file control. But it also means respecting the rights of minority points of view.

Independent political action: A break from the framework of the two-party con game of the rich. Labor needs our own voice and party. Class collaboration is a death trap for working people.

Activists for Independent Socialist Politics (AISP) seeks to rebuild an independent socialist movement in the United States. The traditional left and progressive groups have failed. We seek collaboration and democratic discussions with other activists and groups who agree with the three basic principles outlined above.

AISP members are political activists in trade unions, feminist organizations, Black, Latino and Asian groups, student groups and other movements for social change.

We believe there can be no socialist future unless the working class and environmental movements unite as one.

If you agree with this approach to politics and want to help us rebuild an independent socialist movement in the United States, contact Activists for Independent

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Editor: Malik Miah

Editorial Committee: Alex Chis, Claudette Bégin, Suzanne Forsyth Doran, Alan Hanger, Mo Harry, Barry Sheppard, Lee Artz (Chicago), Kathleen O'Nan (Los Angeles)

Business Manager: Alan Hanger

Design and Production: Blue Dog Design

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Important Example for Organized Labor

Coal Strike Ends With Victory for Miners

Rank and file members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) voted December 14, 1993 to ratify a five-year contract with the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association (BCOA), ending a seven-month strike involving nearly 18,000 miners in seven states.

Some 65 percent of the union members casting ballots voted for the agreement, which contains wage and pension increases while compromising on health benefit costs and reforms in scheduling practices, but most importantly strengthening hiring guarantees for union miners.

The miners' ability to stand firm and win a strike—in a period when most labor leaders say the strike weapon is not effective—is an important victory for organized labor. It shows that collective action and solidarity is the best answer to employers' threats to break up companies and bust unions.

Winning new jobs for miners

"With this new agreement, we are winning jobs with a future for UMWA members," said Mine Workers President Richard Trumka. "Our members can go back to the mines with their heads held high, knowing that we beat the odds and won a strong contract that guarantees our right to job opportunities. And because of the commitment of UMWA members and the backing of working families across the coalfields, we're going back to work with the strongest National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement ever.

"We won as always because of the solidarity of our members. Almost 18,000 miners were on strike, yet not one striker ever crossed a picket line. That solidarity is a hallmark of our union and provided the strength it took to win at the bargaining table," Trumka said. Veteran negotiator W.J. Usery, appointed by U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich to mediate between the UMWA and the BCOA, called the negotiations "without question the toughest set of contract negotiations I've ever been involved in."

By SUZANNE FORSYTH DORAN

Job security

The strike began in February against Peabody Holding Company, the nation's largest coal producer. After a month, the union granted coal operators a 60-day extension of the 1988 agreement, but the strike expanded on May 10 when the extension expired and the BCOA refused to negotiate.

The key issue in the dispute was the coal industry's practice of "double-breasting," or establishing non-union subsidiaries with intent of denying jobs to union coal miners. The coal companies' strategy was to use a network of holding companies with different corporate names to avoid their contractual obligation to hire laid-off union miners, eroding the union's strength. This same strategy has been used to attack Teamsters and workers in the building trades.

The union fought for its members' rights to jobs at these non-union operations when the mines they currently work in close. Productivity by UMWA coal miners has increased approximately 200 percent since the mid-1980s, and the average life-span of a mine is now only seven years. New technology may reduce that to less than four years. The UMWA argued that without job security rights, its members were literally "mining themselves out of a job." Under the new agreement, UMWA members are guaranteed 60 percent of all new jobs, by seniority, at all a company's existing, new or newly-acquired non-union bituminous coal operations. Companies are required to provide notice of available jobs, a 60-day notice before opening any new mines, and provide a list of all jobs filled by UMWA members. The new agreement carries forward all of the existing job security language from the 1988 contract and provides for working employees at union operations to request jobs

at non-union coal mining operations—an important provision which will aid the UMWA in organizing new mines.

The controversial aspects of the agreement center around concessions in scheduling reforms and health care. The agreement allows operators to institute alternative work schedules and work on Sundays, but only if employment in the mine is increased. Mine operators may now schedule four 10-hour work days at straight-time pay. However, if miners agree to work a voluntary fifth day of overtime, work for unemployed miners could be reduced and a 50-hour work-week become the norm. Employers may also implement a three to four-day weekend/holiday shift which would pay as much as 70 hours pay for 46 hours work.

In terms of health care, costs are cut by establishing a preferred provider list. In addition, there is a \$1,000 yearly "deductible," offset by a yearly \$1,000 cash payment which active miners will receive each year. Because the miners may keep the \$1,000 whether they spend it on health care or not, critics warn this may be an incentive not to seek medical attention.

Strategy of selective strike

From the beginning, the Mine Workers adopted a "selective strike" strategy, targeting mines they felt would cost the coal operators the greatest economic hardship and using working miners to support the strikers. According to the union, not one miner crossed the picket line, although some companies tried to maintain minimal operations by using foremen, often brought in from out of state. These scab operations were mostly just an effort by the coal operators to discourage the miners. Nationally coal production was affected, and several East Coast utility companies had to import their coal from South America.

The selective strike strategy was effective in causing individual coal companies

Continued on Page 31

United Airlines Shake-up

By CARL FINAMORE

The International Association of Machinists (IAM) and the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) have signed a tentative agreement to purchase majority ownership of United Airlines.

The deal must be approved by the two unions before the end of January; then it will be put before shareholders of UAL, United's parent. If the shareholders ap-

prove, the ownership transfer will occur no later than August 31.

At least for now, the Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) will halt corporate plans to break up the nation's largest airline into little non-union pieces. But majority worker stock ownership is a far cry from workers' control. Only three seats on the board of directors are reserved for employee representatives. The board will be increased from 12 to 13 members if the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA) joins the ESOP.

While stock will be purchased by some 60,000 employees in return for significant wage concessions, ESOP stock is quite different from normal common stock traded on the stock exchange.

ESOP stock cannot be cashed in until the person leaves active employment.

If the company declines, as Pan Am and Eastern did, the workers aren't able to bail out, as Wall Street investors can.

The management-dominated board of directors can also issue more stock to raise capital, and thereby dilute the investment of workers. This is what happened at Weirton Steel. (See accompanying article.)

These are some of the reasons why most investment analysts favor the deal. The ESOP has been heralded by employers and by President Clinton's administration as an innovative approach for the future, but its example will only serve to prolong the life of concession bargaining.

No matter how you slice it, United em-

United Buy-Out is a Big Concession Deal Do Workers Really Save Their Jobs with an ESOP?

By MALIK MIAH and RICH LESNIK

By mid-year the largest airline in the country, United Airlines, could be "controlled" by its union employees. Leaders of the machinists and pilots unions say an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) is the best way to protect union jobs. The loss in pay and benefits for the employees in exchange for 53 percent stock ownership is considered secondary to achieving this "job protection plan." (See accompanying article for more details.)

What is the truth about the ESOP? Is the ESOP a way for workers to obtain control over their jobs? Should workers support employee ownership?

Wearing two hats

There are several problems with an ESOP from the point of view of workers and unionists. For one, it mixes bosses with employees. We are supposed to be "owners" and "employees" at the same company. The front of our hat says "owner" and the back says "worker." It implies that you as an owner can tell you as a worker to speed up and work harder to improve the profits of "your" company.

But an ESOP won't change the basic relationship between workers and bosses in the marketplace. We remain an em-

ployee whether we own stock in the company or not.

An ESOP does give top management an important advantage: more employees believe labor and management have the same interests. Who needs a union? Some workers at United are already asking if union dues end with the ESOP.

Management wants workers to be anti-union and against worker solidarity. They will encourage workers to fink on co-workers for not working hard enough. The ESOP will increase divisiveness in the workplace.

An ESOP company, like all companies, operates in the capitalist marketplace. It must make a large enough profit margin to satisfy all its shareholders and lenders. Thus the ESOP company will demand work rule changes and concessions from the workers again and again, just as current owners do, to stay "competitive."

Weirton Steel example

A case in point is Weirton Steel in Weirton, West Virginia. It has had an ESOP for 10 years. The workers, organized by the Independent Steelworkers Union, agreed to major concessions to "buy" the company. In the first five years there was labor peace because the company was

profitable. In fact, workers cut corners at unprecedented levels to step up production.

But in the last five years, as earnings declined, top management asked for more concessions. A new CEO was brought in and the board of directors, which is not controlled by the union, began taking steps to dilute the stock of the so-called employee-owners. As one Weirton worker put it: "We felt what we were doing was best for the company [through pay cuts and layoffs]. I won't do that today."

At United Airlines we will take major pay cuts, with no snap-backs, after the ESOP stock is purchased. We are promised "job security." Yet, the new Board of Directors will have only two or three union representatives. (One seat each out of 12 will go to machinist, pilot and non-union employee representatives. A 13th seat will be added for the Association of Flight Attendants if they join the ESOP.)

But even if the unions had a majority of board seats, UAL would still operate in the marketplace. A leader of the pilots' union told the MacNeil, Lehrer Report on December 23 that if UAL faces hard times soon, even under the ESOP with its "no layoff" clause, the "hard decision"

Continued on Page 6

ployees' share of the pie will be cut.

Up and down negotiations

Negotiations have run hot and cold since they began on July 16, 1993.

The AFA walked out of the talks on September 30 when United announced that flight attendant jobs currently filled by AFA members in the western United States would be moved to Taiwan.

On November 12, negotiations broke off completely. The company rejected a multi-billion dollar IAM-ALPA buyout offer and finalized the sale of 15 flight kitchens, affecting over 5,200 IAM food service workers.

UAL refused to hold off selling the flight kitchens unless the food service workers accepted a 38 percent reduction in wages and benefits. Proposed wages at the flight kitchens began at \$5/hour and rose to \$9 after the 10th year. This slave-labor proposal was rejected outright by the union.

Negotiations ended abruptly and with great bitterness. The IAM and ALPA launched an extensive "work safe" and "work to rule" program. Even though still not part of the negotiations, the AFA cooperated fully. The actions had a significant impact.

Flights were delayed and two major airports almost closed, after several thousand IAM members across the country stayed home sick on some of the busiest air travel days of the year—during the Thanksgiving weekend.

Coming at the same time as the phenomenally effective strike by American Airlines Flight Attendants, the United job actions produced a conciliatory stance from management. The company recognized it had underestimated the anger of the workforce, and announced that it wanted to restart negotiations on December 1.

Union buyout offer

Both the IAM and ALPA offered major concessions to gain majority stock ownership for union and non-union employees.

The IAM proposal lowers wages by 9.7 percent and gives up another 5 percent increase due in May; endures a wage freeze for up to 6 years; and extends the workday by 30 minutes with no additional pay (ending the 1/2-hour paid lunch).

Under the ESOP proposal, United will set up a smaller "airline within an air-

line." The smaller airline, called U2, will specialize in flights of less than 750 miles, and will feature substantially lower pay and longer hours for pilots.

U2 will compete with profitable no-frills carriers like Southwest, the industry's current profit leader. Southwest pilots, though unionized, typically fly over 70 hours a month, compared with about 50 hours for United and American Airlines pilots.

Jobs and income under attack

Management's plan to break up the airline spelled disaster for the current workforce but was a bonanza for stockholders.

According to a confidential report approved by UAL's board of directors in August, 1993, stocks would rise from today's \$145 per share to \$252 per share. Some 23,000 union jobs were slated for contracting out.

The document stated: "Primary vendor advantages are 30 percent-60 percent lower wages and labor flexibility via part-time or contract labor." New short-haul subsidiaries or partners were explicitly expected to have "no union involvement."

The candid report also measured the financial impact "labor unrest" would have on the stock. A severe labor disruption, the authors warned, would see stock plummet over 30 percent, forcing UAL to ditch plans to directly confront the unions.

But none of that happened.

From the beginning, the IAM and ALPA leaders conceded defeat by giving in to company demands of major wage cutbacks and establishment of a low-cost airline. In exchange, the unions received contract language guaranteeing jobs for the duration of the six-year wage freeze.

Workers are hoping this "guarantee" is better than others, which have been broken by management crying over "low profits." With low-cost U2 in their hand, management has a foot in the door. They can very easily come back to machinists and flight attendants demanding the

same type of wage concessions that pilots flying U2 are giving up.

Union Leadership

Union officials are mistaken in thinking we can simply buy ourselves out of the extreme crisis. Negotiations should have continued, but with the ranks simultaneously organized to protest the company's sales of assets. Instead, all hopes were focused exclusively on the buy-out negotiations.

The "work safe" program was not instituted until the first round of talks broke off on November 12, and it was virtually suspended when the new talks began on December 1.

Militant mood emerges

By the end of 1993, employees' mood was militant, stemming from a complete sense of betrayal by the company, and a large dose of anger at the union leadership for waiting too long to respond.

Coordinated actions by the three unions could have brought the whole job-threatening scheme to a grinding halt. The 5-day strike by 21,000 American Airlines flight attendants showed how one union could ground a major carrier. Imagine the power of all three unions working together.

But union negotiators were banking exclusively on majority ownership to save jobs at UAL. With the sale of the flight kitchens and the loss of 5,200 jobs still fresh in our minds, many members believe this was the only road. ▼

Carl Finamore is employed by United Airlines in San Francisco and is an elected grievance committeeman for IAM Local Lodge 1781.



"Maybe I'm old fashioned, but I kinda miss lunch breaks."

ESOP

Continued from Page 5

would be made by the unions to support reducing the workforce.

This puts into perspective the other ESOP clause that "guarantees" the union representatives on the board veto power over certain asset sales. This safety clause lasts, in fact, for only the first six years. But like the "no layoff" clause, the "no sell of assets" clause is contingent on the health of the economy and how the airline fares in the marketplace (as is true today).

Illusion of control

Ownership of stock is not the same as control. Eugene Kellin, an investment banker involved in the UAL deal reassured the *Wall Street Journal* that management will clearly call the shots at United after the ESOP goes through. "The company is run like any other company, by a CEO and a management selected by him who is responsible to the board of directors," he said. "There are provisions in this deal," he added, "to issue additional equity" if management believes it's the right course.

Under capitalism, the market rules unless labor forces it to bend. That's why we have unions. It is why we will need an even stronger independent union with or without ESOP.

The top union leaders are selling us an illusion of control. But it is not true.

Illusion of job security

The claim that workers will have "job security" through an ESOP is misleading at best. United Airlines, like other businesses, will decide on layoffs, as the ALPA leader said, based on its profitability over the next six years under the ESOP. The "no lay-off" clause in the ESOP deal is only a hope.

Whether workers have a large or small percentage of stock does not change who runs the company. At Eastern Airlines, workers had more than 37 percent employee ownership, more than enough under ordinary circumstances to assure controlling interest in a publicly-traded company. But the union did not have



control. The ESOP prepared for the disaster at Eastern. It gave false hopes to the employees. The IAM's large shareholdings and one representative on the board of directors was not enough to prevent Frank Lorenzo from buying out the company and destroying the airline. There are hundreds of former Eastern employees now working at United who joke about what they do with their worthless stock.

There are minority ESOPs at Northwest and TWA today. As at UAL, the International Association of Machinists has a representative on the board. In truth, board membership ties the IAM more into the plans of the management. Does this protect the average union members' interests? It didn't at Eastern.

The Clinton administration is supporting United's ESOP and the concept of employee ownership. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, "Labor Secretary Robert Reich helped broker the buyout negotiations between UAL Corp.'s United Airlines and its unions over the past several weeks." (December 23, 1993 *Wall Street Journal*)

Clinton's airline commission also recommended more labor-management cooperation in union and non-union situations. Why the gung ho approach? Because ESOPs get what all managers want: lower labor costs and work rule changes without a fight by labor. Without ESOP there would be "war" at United and other companies attempting to drastically cut wages and worsen working conditions that were won over decades of struggles.

ESOPs are not a victory for labor. They

demobilize unions and put us in a much weaker position for the inevitable battles down the road.

Concessionary pact

In truth, this ESOP is a fancy name for concessions. The top union leaders would be more honest to say so: "We don't believe we can win against management, so we believe major concessions are the way to save jobs."

They don't say this. Instead, they sell us a bill of goods about the need for us to "control" our companies through employee ownership. The ESOP sugar-coating is a ruse to get us to swallow the poison pill without putting up a fight. At UAL (United's parent corporation), CEO Stephen Wolf will have what he demanded from day one: lower labor costs through major wage concessions, an end to the paid lunch and weaker work rules. (And he walks away with tens of millions as his golden parachute!)

In any battle with employers, it may be necessary to concede some issues, based on the relationship of forces in the struggle. All workers fear for their jobs in today's economic times. But to give in without waging a fight weakens our potential for solidarity and unity in future battles.

The top union leaders say, "ESOP or no jobs." The IAM International leadership has had this approach for more than a decade. But it is a flawed strategy.

There is always an alternative strategy to ESOP or capitulation to top management. It is to organize a fight against the board of directors and demand they junk their union-busting plans. They *always* tell workers, "take it or else." We must say, "No" and organize a fight. We should plan to go to other workers for support, as the coal miners just did to help win their strike, and as we have done in the past. ▼

Malik Miah and Rich Lesnik are employed by United Airlines in San Francisco. They are elected shop stewards at Local Lodge 1781 of the International Association of Machinists. This article was widely circulated in San Francisco and other cities before the ESOP vote.

United Campaign by Labor and Black, Mexican-American and Puerto Rican Community Needed School Crisis in Chicago

By LEE ARTZ

Last fall, in what has become a semi-annual Chicago ritual, politicians and the media cast about for scapegoats as the public schools faced a \$300 million shortfall in a \$2.8 billion annual budget. As usual, teachers and students were singled out for sacrifice. And as usual, neighborhood groups, parents, and students rallied to defend the teachers.

For the time being, the schools and teachers have survived.

However, this last battle suggests that the deepening crisis in the Chicago public schools is about to end in disaster.

Showdown avoided

On a cold Friday afternoon last October, for instance, Black ministers led a contingent of several hundred students and parents in a city hall protest against the closing of Chicago's public schools. The following Monday, 5,000 youths, led by the Gangster Disciples, surrounded city hall and marched in a disciplined fashion for over three hours, demanding that the schools be opened and funded.

Democratic Mayor Richard Daley did not appear at either action or any of the dozens of others organized by churches,

gangs, students, teachers, and parents. Later in the week the Gangster Disciples engineered a five-gang alliance which launched a political action committee called 21st Century VOTE. As the October 13 Chicago *Tribune* noted, "by capturing the popular themes of discontent and tapping the ranks of street gangs, 21st Century demonstrated that it can be a force in city politics." In fact, during the 1993 school crisis, 21st Century emerged as the most vocal supporter of teachers and public education in Chicago.

The clear response of 21st Century stands out in stark contrast to the cowardice of the more traditional political leaders. Although the teachers refused to make any drastic concessions, their 30,000-member American Federation of Teachers (AFT) local did little to mobilize or lead available public support.

Meanwhile, even as they blamed each other for the crisis, Mayor Daley, Republican Governor Jim Edgar, the Illinois

State Legislature, the Chicago School Board, and the School Finance Authority agreed to lock out the students in a united campaign to wring concessions from the teachers.

Mayor Daley launched the campaign this past summer when he began pressuring teachers to work longer days, extend the school year, pay more for health insurance and accept a salary freeze.

Later, in opposing increased state funding for Chicago public schools, Illinois Senate President, Republican James Philip, concurred with the Democratic mayor, arguing that the state legislature shouldn't even discuss the school issue "until the unions come to a conclusion on how much they are willing to give up."

Democrat or Republican, city or state, elected or appointed, officials and politicians of every stripe were prepared to close the schools. Only the intervention of Judge Charles Kocoras, who suspended the state constitution, kept the schools open. Kocoras repeatedly issued injunctions forcing the School Board to open the schools and pay the teachers. In the end, however, local politicians and downstate legislators convinced AFT President Jacqueline Vaughn to "loan" the School Board \$300 million from the teacher's pension fund.

Now, the School Board has to convince Chicago bankers to issue school bonds to cover the debt. No one expects favorable terms and the banks are demanding increased property taxes as collateral. In short, even if this year's budget can be balanced by some creative bookkeeping, the crisis remains. The bankers, realtors, and their elected government officials expect Chicago's working people to pay more for schools that deliver less.

In the meantime, local Democratic politicians like State Representative Coy Pugh, Alderman Allan Streeter, and School Board member Florence Cox have begun wooing the 21st Century. Whether 21st Century leaders are seduced by patronage



Continued on Page 26

Ultra-nationalist wins big in Russian election

Voters Reject Yeltsin's Shock Therapy

By RENFREY CLARKE

MOSCOW — At the televised election-night extravaganza in the Kremlin December 12, the mood as the early results were posted was one of horror and disbelief. With few exceptions the thousand guests, who included cabinet ministers, leaders of all 13 political parties and blocs running for the new Russian parliament, and the cream of Moscow's artistic intelligentsia, were expecting a solid victory for the pro-government Russia's Choice bloc.

But Russia had chosen differently. In first place was the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) headed by extreme nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation was also polling strongly.

This issue: Focus on Russia

The dramatic events in Russia on October 3-4 once more focused attention on this area of the world. While the U.S. media attempted to put a democratic "spin" on the shelling of the Russian White House, we only have to imagine tanks rolling down Pennsylvania Ave. and shelling the U.S. Capitol if Clinton gets tired of Congress's stalling, to understand what it really means.

I traveled to Moscow in October to cover events. While there I saw grandmothers begging in the street and young parents going to U.S. charity-sponsored outlets to get milk for their babies, witnesses to the devastating impact of Yeltsin's "shock therapy" march to capitalism. While I was there the price of bread and milk went up 40 percent, the second time in a month, and a government commission said that by the year 2000 forty-two mines employing 50,000 miners would have to be closed. Against this grim backdrop we also report on the positive developments taking place in organizing against this attack.

Independent Politics is devoting more than half this issue to an analysis and update. There are two articles by Renfrey Clarke, the Moscow correspondent of the Australian *Green Left Weekly*, who has been a resident in Moscow for over three years. His article on Russia 1993 sets the stage for understanding the October events, and his article on the elections

Yeltsin's "reforms" massively rejected

Not even the news that President Boris Yeltsin's much-criticized draft constitution had been adopted, with participation in the referendum creeping over the 50 percent [officially 54.8 percent] needed for the result to be valid, could dispel the gloom of the "new Russians" who had come to toast a big step along their country's road to capitalism. Yeltsin's "reforms" had been massively rejected. The regime had suffered a devastating loss of authority. The September coup that overturned the old parliament and the bloodshed of October had largely been in vain; the new parliament would be as hostile to the president as the old one. Moreover, it would possess the authority of a freshly elected assembly.

Official results from Russia's 89 republics and regions have given Zhirinovskiy's LDP 23 percent of the vote, with Russia's Choice second at 15.3 percent. The Communist Party gained 12.3 percent. Women of Russia received 8.1 percent and the Agrarian Party 7.9 percent. Parties giving their general backing to Yeltsin's concepts of economic reform gained only about a third of the vote. Only 225 out of 450 seats of the Duma, the parliament's lower house, were allocated according to what percentage of the vote a party received. The other half of the Duma's seats were filled in individual contests in which the pro-Yeltsin

puts the reactionary Zhirinovskiy into context.

The article on the U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia points to some things we can do here, while the article on organizing the workers' movement in Russia covers Russian activities. The interview with three activists from KAS gives some insight into an important current developing in the ex-USSR.

Two more articles from Moscow alert us to some of the dangers evident in collapsing Stalinism. The English-language "Inside Russia" guide to restaurants warned me that a "great part of all crimes in Moscow are unfortunately committed by visitors from the Caucasian republics. They are usually dark haired, moustached and more swarthy than Russians." Laure Akai's article on Moscow's "ethnic cleansing" explains these blatantly racist statements heard by visitors to Moscow. Mikhail Tsovma's article on Nazi organizing sounds an alarm, as does Claudette Bégin's article on Russian women.

Finally, the article by Barry Sheppard steps back and analyzes the fall of Stalinism and what it means for revolutionaries today. — ALEX CHIS

All of the people writing from Moscow can be reached through KAS-KOR, P.O. Box 16, Moscow 129642, Russia, which operates as a center for the left in Moscow. Email: krazchenko @ glas.apc.org. Alex Chis can also be reached on Email: achis @ igc.apc.org.

forces did better than Zhirinovsky and other groups.

Even the narrow approval of Yeltsin's constitution holds little joy for government supporters. It was adopted by a mere 27.8 percent of eligible voters. Though ensuring passage under the president's rules, this result scarcely suggests that the constitution will enjoy broad popular respect. The result will cut little ice in Russia's ethnic republics and regions, which were denied any independent say on the document's version of federalism.

Supporters of the government will also be uncomfortably aware that the constitution passed only because it had vigorous support from Zhirinovsky's party—which Russia's Choice during the campaign characterized as "fascist." Russia's Choice and the LDP were the only parties to give their unequivocal backing to the new constitution, which provides for a super-strong presidency. Zhirinovsky has repeatedly said he would like this post for himself.

Flight from reason

As the election results became clear, government supporters were left trying to explain. Shocked would-be revelers at the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses turned in fury on the population; the electorate, some were heard to say, had all been drunk. More reflective members of the elite speculated on a collective flight from reason. If thousands of Russians could join the White Brotherhood, led by a former Communist Youth League activist claiming to be the reincarnation of Jesus Christ, why should millions not cast their votes for a cult of Zhirinovsky?

Almost no one among the elite was uttering self-criticisms. But if anyone in Russia in the past few years has been guilty of unreason, it has been Yeltsin and his "democrats." How could a decision to free prices when industry remained heavily monopolized have led to anything except rapid inflation and plunging output? How likely were voters to support a government that made a deliberate practice of paying wages months late?

More to the point, how could a presidential coup against the constitution and an artillery assault on the parliament lead to advances for democracy?

This, however, only begins to answer the question: why did

Continued on Page 21



What Is Russia Today?

By BARRY SHEPPARD

For a long time, the existence of the Soviet Union appeared to be an immutable fact of life for most socialists. The breakup of the Soviet bloc and of the USSR itself has resulted in a great deal of confusion and disorientation within the socialist left. While some hope for a miraculous revival of the Stalinist system to save the day, others hope to maintain loyalty to the socialist project by denying that anything much has changed.

However, more thoughtful socialists, those not afraid of reality, have had a contradictory response—a deep feeling that something progressive and positive has been lost on the one hand, and an elation that the albatross of Stalinism has been discredited on the other. I believe that this contradictory response reflects a contradictory reality

This contradictory reality of the demise of the USSR is only one aspect of the world situation, however. The other is the crisis of world capitalism in the advanced imperialist countries as well as in the semi-colonial capitalist countries.

The End of the USSR

By now most socialists would agree that something was fatally flawed in the USSR under the Stalinist regime (which continued under Stalin's successors). It's clear that there can be no socialism without democracy and solidarity. Building socialism requires movement toward greater and greater equality and incorporation of the working people into the running of the economy and all affairs of state. It also requires solidarity with the international struggle for socialism. Many have come to understand that building socialism in an isolated backward country alone is impossible.

But Marxists know that behind great events such as the collapse of the USSR there must lie more than bad leaders and mistaken policies. We need an analysis of the underlying class dynamics that led to the collapse.

Very briefly, I will outline what I think those dynamics were. Whether readers agree with me or not on terminology or analysis, I hope they will consider the effects these changes have had on the world relation of class forces.

Here is the outline:

1. The Russian revolution and its subsequent extension to much of the former Czarist empire was a genuine revolution of the workers and peasants.
2. This revolution established the first workers' and peasants' government, and the first workers' state, in world history.
3. Because this revolution occurred in relatively backward

Continued on Page 10

Russia Today

Continued from Page 9

countries, it could not conceivably survive the hostile imperialist environment unless the socialist revolution spread into the advanced countries of Europe. If it didn't, it would be overthrown in a counterrevolution, Lenin and the Bolsheviks said.

4. Revolution was on the agenda in capitalist Europe, especially Germany, following the first world war. But the revolution there was defeated, largely due to the outright betrayal of the Socialist parties and the inexperience of the newly-formed Communist parties.

5. This isolation did lead to the counterrevolution in the USSR. The Bolshevik party was overthrown in a bloody counterrevolution led by Stalin in the 1920s and 1930s, and the democratic soviets were crushed. But this counterrevolution did not yet take the form of a capitalist restoration. Instead, an intermediate layer between the workers and world capitalism, a privileged layer in the bureaucracy of the government and the economy, took power and crushed the workers and peasants.

6. Until the end of the 1980s, this middle-class layer based itself on the forms of property that had emerged from the revolution: nationalized property in the means of production operated under a planned economy, state monopoly of foreign trade, inconvertibility of the ruble, nationalization of the land, etc.. It sucked its privileges in a parasitic way from the system by means of its control over distribution of goods. This privileged bureaucracy cloaked itself, however, with the mantle of socialism and the revolution, and even denied its own existence.

7. For an historical period, the USSR remained highly contradictory, remaining with the basic conquests of the revolution in its economic forms, but ruled by a privileged, dictatorial caste standing above the workers and peasants. It was a bureaucratically degenerated workers state.

8. This contradiction could not last forever. In order to go forward on the

socialist road once again, the workers would have to overthrow this bureaucratic layer and reestablish workers' power. Or, the bureaucracy, growing more and more dependent upon the world capitalist class, would overthrow the remaining conquests of the workers in the economy and reestablish capitalism.

9. It is this latter alternative which we are now witnessing. What has brought us to this point was the failure of the revolution to extend to the West in the period since the 1920s, combined with

U.S.-SOVIET WORKERS INFORMATION COMMITTEE



"The garbage has all been eaten. All that is left is used vouchers, which even the crows don't want." (From *Solidarnost* #4, 1993)

the stultifying effects on the economy by the bureaucracy crushing all initiative from the populace.

10. Without the working people themselves being drawn more and more into making economic and political decisions, and with the lying, graft, and mismanagement inherent in the self-serving "planning" of the bureaucracy, the nationalized economy was systematically plundered and sabotaged.

11. During the Brezhnev era in the 1960s and 70s, this process led to stagnation. Actual decline in the economy began in the late 1970s. The privileged—both state

officials and petty bourgeois layers fostered by them—began to look to the West for salvation. This process quickly developed into an outright stampede to overthrow the Soviet Union and restore capitalism.

12. What exists now in Russia and the other former Soviet republics (as well as in East Europe in a more obvious way) are incipient capitalist states led by people from the bureaucracy and other privileged layers. Whether or not these incipient capitalist states will be consolidated depends upon the resistance of the working class. To stop the drive toward capitalism, the working people will have to overthrow the capitalist governments, and install new workers' and farmers' governments.

Incipient capitalist states

An objection to this characterization could be raised: the workers weren't represented under Stalin either, and since these new governments have not been able to dismantle the nationalized economy through privatization as yet, these states remain bureaucratically degenerated workers states. Capitalism as an economic system does not yet exist.

It is true that full-blown capitalism does not yet exist in the former USSR. But the difference with the past lies in precisely the different class basis of the state. Before, under Stalin and up to the overthrow of the Soviet Union, the bureaucracy defended the nationalized and planned economy against capitalist restoration. It did this poorly and in such a way that it paved the way for capitalist restoration, but it did it. That is what has changed.

Yeltsin, as a top leader of the Communist Party, saw his lot as a member of the privileged *nomenclatural*—a bureaucrat who could live well at the expense of the nationalized economy. Now he is using state power to undermine and overthrow all remnants of the revolution in the economy. State power is being used not to defend these remnants, but to overthrow them, and that is the class differ-

Continued on Page 23

Russia 1993

The Background to Yeltsin's "Democracy"

By RENFREY CLARKE

MOSCOW — "Some of you have begun criticizing the constitution," Russian President Boris Yeltsin on November 26 told leaders of 13 political blocs running for the country's new legislature. "I warn you that your free television time will be taken away from you if you deviate from your topic. Your topic is your program. We will fight for the constitution. I ask you not to touch upon the constitution."

No genuine democracy

The message could hardly have been clearer. Political groups in Russia were free — more or less — to advance their ideas in the race for the new parliament. But they were not free to call for a vote against Yeltsin's draft constitution. Under that document the parliament will be a largely powerless body, readily dismissed by the president, with its upper house stacked after the first two years with unelected nominees of centrally-appointed regional executive chiefs.

Featuring elections in which pro-government parties are dealt all the strong cards, and an ultra-"presidential" constitution that will allow the executive power to bypass any opposition from the parliament or the courts, the system Yeltsin is now setting out to install in Russia has little in common with genuine democracy.

Capitalism at any cost

Yeltsin's central goal is to transform the "barracks socialism" of the past into capitalism, at any cost and at such speed that no popular opposition can arise to halt the process. The main beneficiaries are to be the old party-state *nomenklatura*, plus the aggressive and powerful criminal sub-class, the "mafia."

Democracy is not essential, or even compatible with this model. Events since the September 21 coup that overturned the old parliament have shown clearly that Yeltsin and his ministers no longer believe, if they ever did, that their economic program can be implemented by democratic means. It is just as evident that they are determined to press ahead anyway, and that Western backing for them will be unflinching.

But if an economic program is fundamentally flawed, repression will not make it work. The results of the Yeltsin-Gaidar economic strategies speak for themselves. [Yegor Gaidar was First Deputy Prime Minister and Economic Minister until his resignation January 16.—Ed.]

Since the Russian president's "reforms" were launched in January 1992, industrial output in Russia has fallen by more

than 30 percent; the decline since January 1990 is more than 45 percent. Far from "bottoming out" the crash has accelerated in recent months. In September this year industrial production was falling at an annual rate of 43 percent.

Inflation has not slackened; on the contrary, this autumn's monthly rates of 20 percent were roughly twice those of a year ago. Retail trade during the first eight months of this year was down by 37 percent from the same period in 1992, suggesting how far living standards have fallen.

Yeltsin and his ministers, in short, have achieved something economists used to reckon impossible: combining runaway inflation with a catastrophic drop in production and consumption.

Moving to the Third World

These policies have aroused bitter resistance from important sections of the Russian elite, including many industrial managers. The critics of Gaidarism do not, in most cases, dispute the goal of building capitalism in Russia. But they are appalled

Continued on Page 12

VLAD TUPIKIN



Anarchists and others formed a volunteer medical brigade during the October 3-4 events.

Yeltsin's "democracy"

Continued from Page 11

by the prospect that a few more years of the Gaidar strategies will see Russia sink irredeemably into the Third World — its industries primitive and oriented heavily toward resource extraction, its skilled technologists dispersed and large sections of its population chronically hungry.

In strict terms, Russia cannot yet be classified as part of the Third World; its developed, diversified industrial base continues for the moment to exist and function. But for most Russians, this point is already academic. According to a recent World Bank study, per capita incomes in Russia are now below those of such "upper tier" Third World countries as Mexico, Venezuela and Brazil. Where will the crash stop? At the level of the Philippines? Perhaps Zaire?

Capitalism can't "work" in Russia today

Throughout its final year, Russia's old parliament was armed with detailed and convincing analyses of the flaws in the Yeltsin-Gaidar program. Nevertheless, Yeltsin was able to triumph. His opponents in the parliamentary leadership never developed an alternative strategy that Russia's "power elite" might have found attractive. This failure was no accident; a capitalist model that can "work" in Russia today simply does not exist.

The reasons are clear if we pose the following question: is there any cause to believe that world capitalism now possesses the dynamism required to develop the huge economic expanse represented by Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union? Capitalism, it should be remembered, has not been able to secure real stability and progress in more than a few small parts of its existing Third World periphery. Growth rates in the capitalist world in the 1980s were half those in the 1960s, and in the 1990s have been near zero.

In one of history's more malicious ironies, Russia's rulers are returning the country to capitalism at a stage when that

system is already far into its own "epoch of stagnation," and when its ability to modernize large new territories is no more than a memory.

Russia's intelligentsia

Are Russians beginning to grasp what is in store for them? The more literate members of the "power elite" probably have quite a good understanding. But that has not stopped their present, obviously catastrophic course. In the underdeveloped world, they no doubt reflect, business leaders live in luxury — even if millions starve.

Among the Russian intelligentsia, the confusion and disappointment aroused by developments over the past two years are almost palpable. With few exceptions, the members of Russia's educated professional layers are bitterly anti-communist — they suffered in immediate, personal ways from the lack of intellectual freedoms under the old system, while enjoying few of the rewards. They are reluctant to abandon their hopes in capitalism, while their ability to make sense of their predicament is limited by their generally low level of political culture, an enduring relic of education gained under the Khrushchev and Brezhnev regimes.

Even self-proclaimed "democrats" among the intelligentsia often support authoritarian "solutions." Yeltsin's action in overthrowing the constitution and abolishing the Supreme Soviet was broadly endorsed by educated Russians.

Material reality, however, shapes the consciousness of mental workers as well as manual ones. Unlike industrial workers, the members of the intelligentsia have rarely had the economic muscle to defend their living standards. For state employees such as teachers and health workers, the result has been income levels that at times fall below those of pensioners.

The traditional Russian intelligentsia is now disintegrating. Many of its most highly trained members are seeking to emigrate. Numerous others have had to take work outside their skills. Many educated Russians, especially women, are now unemployed. The bitterness the in-

telligentsia felt against the old system will in time be directed against the new.

The Russian working class

Among Russian workers, the political confusion is less. Despite a traditional contempt for Communists as crass privilege-seekers, workers are not, as a rule, hostile to the concept of socialism, which they associate with guaranteed employment, cheap housing, and free social services.

Worker attitudes toward enterprise managers are ambiguous, and influenced by traditions of patronage. But the attitude toward the state authorities has become clearly hostile this past year, as efforts to slow inflation have restricted credits and forced long delays in paying wages. There is a widespread expectation that once the elections are out of the way, the government will force a wave of bankruptcies, raising unemployment to 25 percent of the work force, or more.

The growing working-class opposition to the Yeltsin regime was shown clearly during November, as coal miners fought government plans to close scores of unprofitable mines. Miners' leaders eventually agreed to postpone a planned national stoppage, in return for concessions that included a government promise of a special commission to investigate the problems of the coal industry. But this was not before workers in the Vorkuta coal fields in the north of European Russia had struck for 24 hours on November 11.

The coal miners, who played a key role in weakening the Gorbachev leadership of the Soviet Union, were until recently among Yeltsin's most committed supporters. Their readiness to use strike action against Yeltsin's government during an election campaign indicates that the shift in workers' thinking has already been profound.

In formal terms, workers in Russia are well organized; the main labor body, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), claims more than 50 million members. But the FNPR, whose leaders spoke out strongly against Yeltsin's September coup, is under intense pressure

from the regime. With bankruptcies and mass firings around the corner, the general position of workers is not strong.

Political action necessary

If the rights of working people in Russia are to be defended, struggles on the job must be backed by political action. At present, the only major political force in Russia which can claim a base among industrial workers, and whose program in any sense articulates their interests, is the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. But for historical reasons, the Communist Party will be incapable, at least for years to come, of leading broad workers' actions.

The task of creating an effective political

leadership for Russian workers therefore devolves on different forces. The militant party that is required will have to be built under the difficult conditions of authoritarianism and economic collapse. Its membership will have various strands: real democrats, coming to a realization that the capitalism of the Russian future cannot allow genuine civil liberties; the most committed members of a new layer of left-wing intelligentsia; and above all, activists who emerge from countless struggles in which workers throughout Russia fight to defend their jobs and living standards. ▼

Renfrey Clarke is the Moscow correspondent for Green Left Weekly.

Ethnic Cleansing à la Russe

By LAURE AKAI

MOSCOW—Of all the repression which took place after the September coup, by far the most outrageous has been the racist measures taken by the government to cleanse the capital on a racial basis. Immediately following the blasting of the White House on October 4, special troops and regular police began a round-up of all "illegal aliens" in the city. Thousands were deported and many more thousands fled, terrified for their safety.

The "propiska"

The legal basis used for this mass operation was the *propiska*, or permit system, a relic of the Stalinist past which required citizens of the former Soviet Union to have a permit to live in Moscow (or any other region) stamped in their passport. Normally this could only be obtained by birthright, a special invitation to study or work, or through marriage. For years there was a market of fake marriages to get around the system.

Without a *propiska*, finding work or a place to live in Moscow was virtually impossible. But in the last few years, as visa regulations were relaxed and as

apartments began to appear freely on the market for rent, more and more people simply ignored these rules and came to live in Moscow. Most of these people are ethnically Russian, but also a large number of others have settled here. This includes many Armenian and Georgian refugees, many traders from Central Asia and China, and Americans and Europeans.

Caucasians harassed

The operation to crack down on illegal residents, which resulted in over 5,000 deportations within the first two weeks alone, was targeted almost exclusively on dark-skinned peoples of the Soviet Union. There was no effort at all to conceal the fact that the prime targets in this operation were people first and foremost from the Caucasus, and from Central Asia. Searches and identity checks were conducted on dark skinned people while "whites" were left alone.

This harassment of people of color has been going on for some time in Moscow, and indeed has always existed to a certain extent in the Soviet Union. People of color are daily stopped and harassed, often having to pay regular bribes to the police to avoid arrest. Now the government, using

the pretext of the *propiska* system, have institutionalized this racism.

Most Russians blame people of color—more specifically, "Caucasians"—for the astronomical crime rate in the city. Government officials, police and even the TV news claim that "80 percent of all the crime committed in Moscow is committed by Caucasians." If this figure is based on arrest records, it is because of the fact that these people are much more likely to be arrested than white-skinned people. The police and the government claim that they are "fighting crime." But in a city where the Russian mafia carries on their business in the open, where law enforcement officials are famous for taking bribes, where police peddle guns and where theft and corruption takes place in the government, this is a laughable excuse.

The general population has been, by and large, supportive of these deportations. Most Russians, newly impoverished and insecure about the future, are seeking people to blame and take out their frustrations on. Before the coup, the police had called on people to inform on their neighbors if they suspected them of being illegal aliens. Hundreds of people called on the first day of the appeal. Now 40,000 citizens have volunteered to help patrol the streets, keeping an eye out for crime and "suspicious individuals."

Human rights abuses

During the operation numerous human rights abuses were reported. Typically, people were grabbed and sent to detention centers without being able to contact friends, relatives, or their embassy, and often without a chance to argue their position. There have been reports of people having their possessions and documents stolen, and of one man having his papers bearing his refugee status torn up. Some people were sent to special "work camps" to earn the money for their "trip home." Those who have been arrested and deported include people who were passing through Moscow or who had legal status. One businessman was arrested at a hotel

Continued on Page 14

Russian and German Nazis Building Links

By MIKHAIL TSOVMA

MOSCOW—On the 27th of October *Inostranets* newspaper (a supplement to the biggest Russian business weekly) published an article about the growing cooperation between two Nazi organizations—the German group “National Offensive” (NO) and Russian National Unity (RNE). Representatives of both groups met in Moscow to discuss possible “solidarity actions.”

German NO was outlawed this summer and Russian National Unity faced the same problem after its active participation in the defense of the Russian parliament in September-October. An agreement was made to organize a week of solidarity and hold protests in front of Russian

offices (including embassies, consulates and Aeroflot air company) in Germany and German offices in Russia demanding legalization of these ultra-right fascist organizations.

The press service of the Ministry of Security (the renamed KGB) confirmed this information and told *Inostranets* that they were aware the meeting was taking place. Of course, they couldn't do anything about it since the meeting looked “like an ordinary meeting of friends.” These bastards are always saying that they act only according to the law when it comes to fighting fascists. The KGB spokesman assured the correspondent that they will take any steps possible to prevent Nazi demonstrations.

Russian National Unity

Russian National Unity appears to be the strongest group in the country openly declaring loyalty to fascist ideas. Before Yeltsin's coup d'etat (after which it was formally outlawed) fascists from the RNE openly trained themselves in shooting and fighting. Stories about this appeared in the papers with frightening photos but none of the authorities seemed to care about that. The only protest against RNE of which I am aware took place in Moscow on August 7. Several young anarchists and communists attacked fascist literature sellers after one of the anarchists was beaten by the thugs from RNE. Of course, when the police arrived they arrested the leftists, not the fascists.

After Yeltsin's decision to disband the parliament at the end of September, thugs from Russian National Unity appeared near the parliament. They were one of the most organized forces and easily got loads of AK-47s (Kalashnikov machine-guns).

Trotskyists and anarchists that appeared near the parliament in

these days were beaten up for the mere notion that they are internationalists. After the storm of the parliament, RNE was outlawed, but a lot of fascists managed to escape arrest. One can be sure that they did not leave machine guns on the battlefield. Alexander Barkashov, the leader of RNE, was not arrested.

Response of the left

Reports on the activities of the RNE before the putsch described it as a 400 to 500-person-strong battle detachment which had a number of sympathizers among the police. Unfortunately, the left in Russia seems to be very disorganized, and of course it poses no real danger to the fascists so far. But anti-fascist actions have to start sometime and the sooner it happens, the better. It will be very good if we can organize an international counter-campaign against RNE in Russia and NO in Germany. This will be a good start for building links among anti-fascist activists. The time is now because Nazis are already trying to build links among themselves. ▼

Mikhail Tsovma is an activist of an anarcho-syndicalist group in Moscow, currently working in the KAS-KOR Labor Information Center.

Ethnic Cleansing

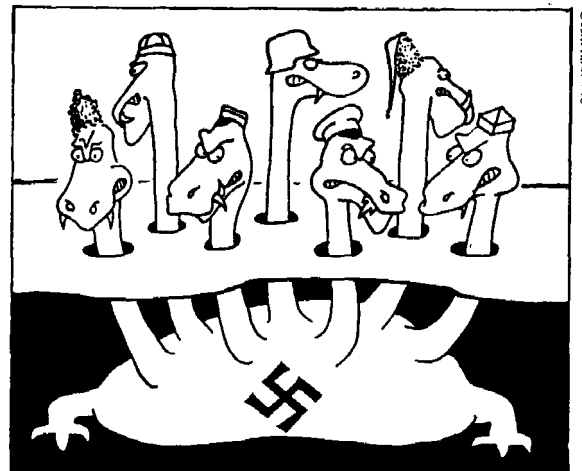
Continued from Page 13

as he tried to register and 65 Chinese students were held and may still be deported. Embassies and businesses have reported harassment of their employees.

Sometimes the scenes have been truly ugly. At one Moscow food market, Russian merchants reportedly helped police turn over the fruit stands, beat and arrest traders from Azerbaijan. The remaining vendors, now without much competition, have raised prices.

Although human rights groups have petitioned the government, and foreign embassies have lodged their protests, the government is totally nonplused. Why shouldn't they be, when around them the major powers of the world carry on similar campaigns with impunity? Latching onto the main theme of the 90s, Russia wants to bleach out its population, and shut its borders to those without money, and to those with dark skin. The rest are welcome. ▼

Laure Akai is an activist, originally from New York, now resident in Moscow.



After the Coup Spreading the Word About the Russian Workers' Movement

ALEX CHIS/INDEPENDENT POLITICS



Moscow press conference of Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia.

By ALEX CHIS

My first activity on arriving in Moscow in October was to attend the international labor conference, "Modern Telecommunications: New Vistas for Workers' Solidarity," which was primarily organized by the KAS-KOR Labor Information Center.

KAS-KOR is an independent center which exists to spread information on the workers movement in the ex-USSR. Just three years old, it got its start during the coal miners' strikes in 1990 when, as KAS-KOR director Kirill Buketov said in an interview (see *IP* #2, p. 14), "It was a big problem for strike committees to organize an exchange of information and how to cooperate because the USSR was a big country. When in one city the strike only started, in another city the strike was finished. It was a very big problem to organize a coordination of activity in differ-

ent cities. And our official newspapers and magazines and radio and TV gave only false information."

The conference this October was another step toward their ambitious goal of facilitating the coordination of the workers' movement across Russia. That the conference took place at all is a tribute to KAS-KOR's determination. Scheduled for October 19-21, Yeltsin's coup and the state of emergency threw the proceedings in doubt, but they decided too much work had taken place in the planning and organization of the conference, and they would go ahead anyway. Western registrants were notified that the conference was on, and apprised of the possible dangers.

Army takes over conference site

After deciding to go ahead, just one week before the conference was to begin the army took over the conference site, where

not only the conference sessions were to be held, but where computers and on-line facilities were to be available to participants, and where everyone was to be housed and fed.

Organizing furiously, with the help of friends such as Vassily Balog, of the International Department of the General Confederation of Trade Unions, KAS-KOR was able to find an alternative site, at a trade union school in the village of Saltikovka, just outside Moscow. With no easy transportation lines from Moscow, they also had to organize a special bus for participants, all this during a curfew and state of emergency.

Electronic communications, censorship and solidarity

For me the conference was a somewhat surreal experience: the new site was in a tranquil birch and conifer forest, there was a bronze bust of Lenin looking down on us as we walked to lunch, but inside the conference sessions the talk was of the most modern in telecommunications technology.

Among the speakers was Anatoly Voronov, the head of GlasNet, a computer network with links to Peacenet in the United States. During the events around the coup, while the print media was censored, he put out *Glasinfo* via electronic mail, making available many of the actual stories which had been censored from the print media, making some of his friends in the West concerned for his safety. But as Anatoly said, when GlasNet USA "sent me a message worrying about the censorship in Russia, and asking whether GlasNet ought to be more circumspect in the coverage of the situation in Russia, I checked the Russian Law on the Press, and discovered that electronic networks are not included in the list of mass media."

Vassily Balog spoke on "Modern Technologies: New Possibilities for Workers' Solidarity." During the coup Vassily put out the information on the arrests of Boris Kagarlitsky and other

Continued on Page 16

Workers' Movement

Continued from Page 15

leaders of the Party of Labor to computer bulletin boards, facilitating the mass response leading to their release. He is the moderator of a computer conference on labor in the ex-USSR.

These two typified the type of speakers at the conference: not just computer experts, but participants in the movement as well. People from throughout Russia, from Kazakhstan and Lithuania, as well as the West, participated. Although attendance was cut down by the October events, the conference was a success by any standards. The ex-USSR is an ideal place for the use of computer telecommunications, with its large distances and lack of easy transportation. With far less in the way of technical facilities than their Western counterparts, at least part of the

Russian Labor Review

Help the workers' movement in the ex-USSR and keep up with the events and debates in the Russian Labor movement by subscribing to *Russian Labor Review*. Subscriptions for North America, Europe and the CIS are \$30/yr. (4 issues), \$50/2 yrs. (8 issues) for individuals; \$50/yr., \$90/2 yrs. for organizations/high income. For Australia, Asia, Africa, and South America the rates are \$40/yr., \$70/2 yrs. for individuals; \$60/yr., \$110/2 yrs. organizations/high income.

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Note that this is a new address.

labor movement in the ex-USSR seems to have a very forward-looking vision of the future possibilities of labor solidarity.

KAS-KOR spreads the word

Far from resting on their laurels after organizing the first labor telecommunications conference in Moscow, KAS-KOR was immediately hard at work. KAS-KOR is an activist group consisting of a few paid staff and many volunteers in Moscow, ages averaging from 21 to 28, who have so many projects it's hard to keep track of them. Their weekly labor radio show, on the ex-USSR's major radio station with a potential listenership of about 300 million, has to be the most widely heard labor show in the world. They produce a weekly Russian language bulletin of news on the workers' movement, distributed to 500 organizations, with news supplied by their network of about 300 correspondents throughout the ex-USSR.

They have just begun a new project, producing an attractive new quarterly English language magazine, *Russian Labor Review (RLR)*. *RLR* is able to cover the events and debates in the labor movement throughout the ex-USSR in a comprehensive way. Like KAS-KOR itself, *RLR* is thoroughly non-sectarian, with articles from a wide variety of viewpoints. For any one at all interested in the ex-USSR or the international labor movement, it's a must.

Subscribers to *RLR* also demonstrate solidarity with the workers' movement in Russia, and help KAS-KOR in their work of spreading the word on workers' struggles throughout the ex-USSR and the world. It is their hope that the financial success of this project will make it possible for them to begin other projects, such as the new Russian language newspaper, *Workers' Action*, a joint project of KAS-KOR in Moscow and the NERV center in St. Petersburg. The first issue of this paper should be out by January 1994. Please subscribe to *Russian Labor Review* and help the workers' movement grow. ▼

Alex Chis is the International Coordinator of Russian Labor Review.

Taking a Stand for Human Rights

By ALEX CHIS

On October 31 in Moscow, three television cameras and numerous radio and press reporters recorded a statement by the newly-formed U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia, condemning the attacks on civil liberties and trade union rights by the Yeltsin government.

Five members of the committee (Elizabeth Bowman, Susan Weissman, Alex Chis, Michel Vale and Bob Stone) traveled to Moscow in the wake of Yeltsin's coup to dramatically express their outrage and to lend their support to democratic and human rights activists in Russia.

Response to U.S. position

The U.S. committee, which also ran an ad in the December 13 issue of *The Nation* magazine [see page 17], was formed as much in response to the U.S. government position on the events in Russia, as to Yeltsin's coup itself.

Listening to President Clinton and Senator Sam Nunn give tacit encouragement to any action Yeltsin wished to take to get rid of his opposition was bad enough. Having to listen to the U.S. media describe, in classic Orwellian doublespeak, everything Yeltsin did as "democratic" was far too much. The closest thing to "balance" any of the major U.S. media approached was the description, without any apparent sense of irony, of Yeltsin as a "democratic dictator."

International and Russian support

International support was evident at the "International Round Table for Democratic and Human Rights In Moscow" organized by Alexander Buzgalin, professor at Moscow State University. Lucciana

Castellina, a member of the European Parliament from Italy, made a statement, as did Hillel Ticktin from Scotland and Livio Maitan from Italy.

Prominent activists from the Russian human rights movement and legal experts discussed democratic rights and the new election laws. Andrei Kolganov, doctor of economic sciences, began the discussion. Among the speakers was Gleb Pavlovsky, the editor-in-chief of Twentieth Century and Peace, famous for hosting the first program to freely talk about democratic rights in Russia in a mass way, a figure comparable in Russia to Noam Chomsky in the West. A call for a Russian Movement for Democratic and Human Rights was made, with a founding con-

ference in Moscow on November 27.

In an effort to stress that Yeltsin can't operate against his opponents with impunity, and to lend the maximum protection possible to Russian activists for workers' and human rights, the U.S. committee held two other press conferences in Moscow before its members left.

The committee received coverage on the two major television stations, both state and independent, the major radio station that broadcasts throughout the ex-USSR and many newspapers including *Solidarnost*, the newspaper of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions. *Izvestia* ran an interview and the press conferences were covered by Spanish, French, Ukrainian, Greek and other international press. ▼

works."

The arrests and beatings occurred amidst the Yeltsin government's broad repression of dissent, including the dissolution of Parliament, suspension of the court that found the dissolution unconstitutional, dissolution of almost all dissenting local governments, and the expulsion of thousands of non-Muscovites from the city.

Every day brings new reports from Moscow of executive orders undermining the rights of independent and opposition newspapers and political parties. Trade unions are being prevented from participating in political life and electioneering, and witch-hunting is threatening the jobs of anti-Yeltsinites. We fear for the safety of our colleagues in the trade union movement and democratic activist organizations. It is for this reason that we feel the urgent need to give our international solidarity an organized form today.

We therefore call on you to add your name to our protest. Join with us and other trade unionists, academics and human rights activists in supporting the "U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia" based on the following simple principles:

- Human rights and freedom of press, assembly and political organization for all in Russia.
- No repression of trade unionists and democratic activists. ▼

U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia Support Human Rights

The following statement, with signers such as Noam Chomsky, Angela Davis, Daniel Singer, Ernest Mandel, Robert V. Daniels, Manning Marable, Alexander Cockburn, Dave Dellinger, Bogdan Denitch, Miriam Braverman, Jane Slaughter, William Kunstler, and Annette T. Rubinstein, appeared as a two-page ad in the December 13 issue of *The Nation* magazine.

Vladimir Kondratov, Alexander Segal, and Alexander Kalinin.

Thanks to an immediate flood of protests from U.S. and European friends, these non-violent democratic activists were eventually released. As Boris Kagarlitsky said, as he entered his apartment, bruised and bloody, "International solidarity

We, the undersigned, protest the recent attacks on civil liberties, trade union rights and freedom of the press and assembly by the Yeltsin government in Russia.

Contrary to the impression given in the U.S. mass media, among those arrested during the October 4 crisis were many sincere democratic activists; several organizations and newspapers were arbitrarily banned by executive order. In Moscow, leaders of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions, the new Party of Labor and the Moscow City Council were rounded up and brutally beaten, among them Boris Kagarlitsky, whose books are well-known in the West,

I agree with the statement and would like to endorse it.

To help further the Committee's work I am enclosing my contribution of:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Member/Signer | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Sustainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Contributing Signer | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Associate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Supporter | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 or more Sponsor |

Please make checks payable to the U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia, P.O. Box 1890 Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009. West Coast address: P.O. Box 8463, Berkeley, CA 94707.

Name _____

Address, Tel/Fax _____

City, State, Zip _____

Affiliation (for identification only) _____

Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists Beginning of the KAS in Russia

The following interview was conducted by Alex Chis of Independent Politics in October 1993 in Moscow, with three activists from the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (KAS): Vlad Tupikin, one of the founders of KAS, Mikhail Tsovma, and Nikolai Muravin. Mikhail Tsovma translated.

Independent Politics: Let's start by going over some general information about KAS, what it is, when and how it started, and what are some of its ideas.

Vlad Tupikin: The founding congress of KAS took place in Moscow in May 1989, but the beginning of creating an anarcho-syndicalist organization started earlier, and by August 1988 the organization which became KAS already existed. KAS was created on the basis of several groups which independently came to the same ideas.

In Moscow, this was a student group called Obshchina—community or commune—which dates back to 1983. There was a group of people, friends, and in 1985-86 they had the organizing committee of the All Unions Revolutionary Marxist Party.

Later there was some evolution of ideas, and by the time the Obshchina group was created in 1987 the main participants already knew that they stood for anarcho-syndicalism. This was mainly under the influence of [19th-century Russian anarchist Mikhail] Bakunin's critique of state socialism and Marxism. These people were mainly historians and had the possibility to read materials in the archives, which was closed to the general public.

IP: Bakunin's writings were not available except to historians?

Mikhail Tsovma: Almost not. There were editions which were published in 1919 by the anarcho-syndicalist printing house. Since then there was only the

"Marxist"—in fact, Stalinist—interpretation of his activity.

Formed in 1987

VT: In May 1987 we created the Obshchina group in the Moscow Teachers College and started organizing different discussions, for example about Komsomol (the Communist youth organization), how it should be organized, and about Stalinism. We were one of the first to discuss this here before the official newspapers, and this was the beginning of these activities

*We understood that
police can prevent
meetings if people are
standing somewhere,
but don't know what to
do if people are
marching in the city.*

in Moscow.

In Irkutsk the group which later became part of KAS was called Socialist Club. It was created in 1988, and the people who established it were previously involved in dissident activities. Igor Podshivalov was an anarchist from 1981 and he participated in publishing a *samizdat* [underground] magazine called *Candle*, and after this was busted by the KGB, all these people were kicked out of university. Two days before the founding congress of KAS took place in Moscow, they found out that there were anarchists in Moscow and they just came.

There was a group in Leningrad called Anarcho-Syndicalist Free Association, influenced by the ideas of Benjamin Tucker, a well known American anarchist.

In Kharkov, Ukraine, there were two groups which emerged during the elections to the congress of People's Deputies of

USSR in 1989, with some activities before that.

Piotr Siuda, one of the participants of the workers insurrection in 1962 in Novochoerkassk, also joined this group, though he had some kind of mixed ideas. He called himself a Bolshevik, but the ideas he was propagating had nothing to do with the communist establishment. He was very close to us and considered himself an anarcho-syndicalist and a Bolshevik at the same time. He had some people whom he worked with in the south of Russia where Novochoerkassk is, and he also had some contact with miners.

In Khabarovsk there was a group called Labor Day. Some of the people from this group later went to the radical-liberal democratic union. The major part became anarcho-syndicalist and they are still active.

During the founding congress on May 1 and 2, 1989, there were people represented from 12 different cities around Russia and the Ukraine. In Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov and Khabarovsk they were mainly young people, students or young teachers, young intellectuals, and in Siberia, they were mainly people who were a little older; maybe due to the patriarchal traditions of this region, where you have to be quite an old man to be something.

The major role in creating a nation-wide organization was the magazine *Obshchina* published in Moscow, which was a *samizdat* publication put out on photocopyers. The readers of this magazine later became the local groups of KAS in different places of Russia. This magazine was one of the top five popular *samizdat* magazines. It was launched in September 1987.

KAS was created as a confederation of real existing local groups. It also participated in a broader movement called the Federation of Socialist Public Clubs (FSOK). The Socialist party of [Boris] Kagarlitsky [currently a leader of the Party of Labor] was also part of this broader formation.

FSOK was created in August 1987, but it really started active campaigns and propaganda in December 1987 and con-

tinued until September 1988. After that it started to disintegrate. KAS was created, and also the Socialist party of Kagarlitsky, and many people from FSOK joined one of those organizations.

IP: Those were the two largest?

MT: KAS was the largest, and for some time it was the major left non-communist organization nationwide, and was mainly young people.

IP: When you say young people, what age range?

MT: Sixteen or seventeen to twenty-five years old.

IP: How old are you three?

MT: I'm twenty-one. Vlad, who is one of the founders of KAS, is twenty-eight, and Nikolai is twenty-seven. So we're getting older; there are no seventeen-year-olds around.

Alternative information source

IP: What did Obshchina and KAS actually do, in terms of street activities? Or was it primarily a propaganda group?

VT: Obshchina group arose after a series of public discussions organized by these revolutionaries in the teachers' college.

They were discussing Soviet and Russian history, the history of Stalinism, the history of socialist thought. It was an alternative system of education because there were no books, no publications in the media, and no discussions in the official propaganda. The people that gathered around this group later became the Obshchina group in Moscow Teacher's College.

Obshchina also participated in gathering signatures for Yeltsin to speak at the Central Committee meeting when he was expelled for his anti-bureaucratic and anti-privilege statements. This was in November, 1987, and Obshchina group was making a campaign not for or against Yeltsin, but a campaign for glasnost in Yeltsin's affair, because the party was trying to make it clandestine and no information was published. This campaign was part of the broader campaign for glasnost. There were several other groups, for example in the university that were for or against Yeltsin, but this was not our case.

There were campaigns during the 19th [Communist] party conference. At those times, there were no parliamentary elections—the party was the state—so by influencing the elections to the party conference, people tried to propagate their own ideas and tried to change things.

Obshchina group and some other groups like liberals were also the organizers for the first demonstrations in Moscow.

IP: I saw a picture of Vlad in a demonstration. Can you tell me the circumstances of that and what the banner said?

VT: This was the famous demonstration, the first march through the city on the 28th of May 1988, and was a part of the campaign against the so-called temporary rules, which banned any meetings and demonstrations in the street. This was a big public campaign against these rules for the freedom of meetings and street actions. Different groups, Obshchina and liberal groups like Civic Dignity, participated in this campaign. We tried to organize demonstrations and leafleted.

We understood that police can prevent meetings if people are standing somewhere, but don't know what to do if people are marching in the city. We organized this march not on the telephone but out on the street so the KGB would not know. On the 28th of May we marched from Bolshoi theater to Pushkin square and established a type of Hyde Park there like in London, where people can gather and discuss. It was for a long time a public meeting place, and *samizdat* literature was distributed there.

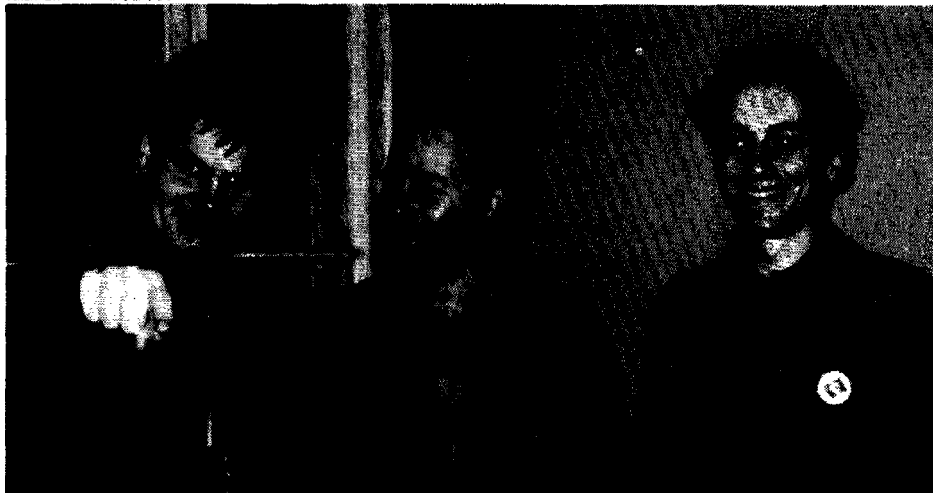
MT: The banner read "Freedom without Socialism is Privilege and Injustice. Socialism without Freedom is Slavery and Brutality," a famous quote from Bakunin.

IP: When was the last demonstration in Moscow like that?

VT: The last march through the city was the illegal Trotskyist demonstration in 1927 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of October. Since then there were no marches of the left. Mainly there were some meetings where people gathered and were arrested by police.

This was May and June 1988 when there were quite a number of meetings, ecological meetings, meetings about Karabagh, etc. This was when a lot of sincere people were taking part in these activities, and there were almost no politicians trying to

ALEX CHIR/INDEPENDENT POLITICS



Nikolai Muravin, Vlad Tupikin, Mikhail Tsovma (left to right)

Continued on Page 20

KAS in Russia

Continued from Page 19

make a career, because it was very dangerous to participate in the movement in those years.

In the end of 1988, members of Obshchina and other groups created the Union of Student Youth, an attempt to create an independent student organization to try to solve some of the problems of the students. In February 1989 we launched a campaign of boycott of military studies in the colleges. In some places like the Moscow Teachers' College this was quite successful. Another campaign was against compulsory studies of Marxism-Leninism in the high schools.

In 1990 one of the biggest campaigns was solidarity for Chinese students, protesting the Tienanmen Square events, in which Obshchina and various democratic groups participated. For two years there were organized camps near Moscow University and demonstrations near the Chinese Embassy, where we were beaten by police. When [Chinese leader] Li Peng was in Moscow we organized protests against that.

IP: Mikhail, can you and Nikolai tell me about your background and how you came to KAS?

Critics of Communist Party

MT: I was a critical communist. I was critical of the communist party and the regime here. In school my friends and I had discussions. Later we met these people from Obshchina who came to our school, were teachers there for some time and inspired everybody.

We created a group called the Socialist Revolutionary Party. We had five members, and we organized many different campaigns in school, mainly with the help of Obshchina. We put leaflets on the walls and made handwritten newspapers. Together with Obshchina we organized public disputes in our school. We were the most active political group.

This was quite a widespread thing in schools. Students were trying to discuss all these problems because this was on the television and radio and in the news in 1988-89. We were not satisfied. We were listening to Russian rock music, which was in some ways quite radical. This was quite a widespread movement

of people dissatisfied with Gorbachev's policies. We wanted more glasnost and we wanted to be more radical. These people often came to groups like Obshchina.

Che Guevara Brigade

IP: Nikolai, I understand you were active in Latin-American solidarity groups. Can you tell us about the Che Guevara Brigade and some of your history?

Nikolai Muravin: This was quite a long time ago. These groups existed semi-legally during the Soviet years, beginning from 1984 to 1988-89, when some people became members of the Obshchina group in Moscow.

So the Che Guevara Brigade, the group I was in, is a little older than the Obshchina group. Besides the Che Guevara Brigade, there were all different groups that were building solidarity links with Latin America. This was one of the parts of official propaganda, but these people participated in it sincerely.

The Che Guevara group consisted of both Soviet people and Latin American students and refugees that were here. They were trying to raise money for Chilean communists and radicals, and they were making links with the wounded people from Salvador and Nicaragua who were in Soviet hospitals. In 1985, they helped leftists organize an election campaign in Moscow because there were a lot of Peruvian students here. They made cards for one of the leftists who was running for president, and though in Peru the right-wing person won, in Moscow the leftist won.

There were some people working in Ukraine in agricultural farms who raised money and sent it to Nicaragua. From 1987, we expanded our contacts to students and refugees from Namibia, Kurdish resistance in Iran, and also started to make links with other leftist groups like Obshchina.

In 1988, there was a concert to commemorate Che Guevara. I and other people met with Cuban students who were here, and I have a feeling that this was exactly the same in 1935 in Russia when there



Vlad Tupikin (beard) carrying banner in the famous demonstration on May 28, 1988. The banner reads 'Freedom without Socialism is Privilege and Injustice. Socialism without Freedom is Slavery and Brutality,' a famous quote from Bakunin.

were sincere communists who understood the nature of Stalinism but they couldn't do anything about it.

By 1988-89 we understood that these activities were no longer uniting us. Some people joined KAS, some people joined the Party of Labor and some just stopped political activity.

MT: KAS was almost the only organization that tried for some time to keep these international solidarity campaigns going. For example, there was the campaign with Chinese students from Tienanmen Square. We also made protests when they bombed Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney in the USA. We protested near the American Embassy. ▼

In the next issue of IP we will continue this interview with KAS activists.

Shock Therapy

Continued from Page 9

the LDP, which had been registering only 5 to 10 percent support when electoral rules forced a halt to the publication of opinion poll findings 10 days earlier, rise to swamp the other contenders?

Zhirinovskiy and the LDP

Zhirinovskiy is a former lawyer who achieved national prominence as a candidate in the 1991 presidential elections, won by Yeltsin. Running a colorful campaign around demands like halving the price of vodka, Zhirinovskiy gained an unexpectedly high 8 percent of the vote.

The Zhirinovskiy political message is so primitive that more sophisticated politicians have often made the mistake of treating the man and his party as a joke. According to Zhirinovskiy, Russia's problems are the fault of leaders who have sold the country out to foreign interests, given away its wealth to ungrateful client states, or neglected Russia's legitimate interests outside its borders.

Any territory which has ever been under Russian rule he considers part of Russia. He once called for taking back Alaska from

the United States, and calls for the restoration of a single state in the territory of the former Soviet Union. Asked about his attitude to Ukraine's possession of nuclear weapons, he screamed: "Ukraine isn't going to be an independent state!" He also recently declared: "This idea of the right of nations to self-determination is a communist one and we have nothing in common with it. Of course we won't force anyone to join us. We'll use only economic pressures. They'll beg us to let them back into the union."

Racist and ruthless

As well as being imperialist, Zhirinovskiy's ideas are virulently racist. People from Georgia and Armenia, he declared recently, should be banned from visiting Russia. Though denying charges of anti-Semitism, he has accused Jews of "infecting the country."

To curb Russia's crime wave, Zhirinovskiy proposes simple, ruthless measures. In his last television appearance before the elections, he stated: "We need to set up field courts martial on the spot and shoot the leaders of these gangs."

The LDP's economic pronouncements vary wildly depending on the audience and the speaker. At a press conference before Western correspondents, Zhirinovskiy voiced support for private enterprise and said that under his leadership there would be "no government interference and no government backing" for business. Before Russians, LDP speakers call for halting reform mea-

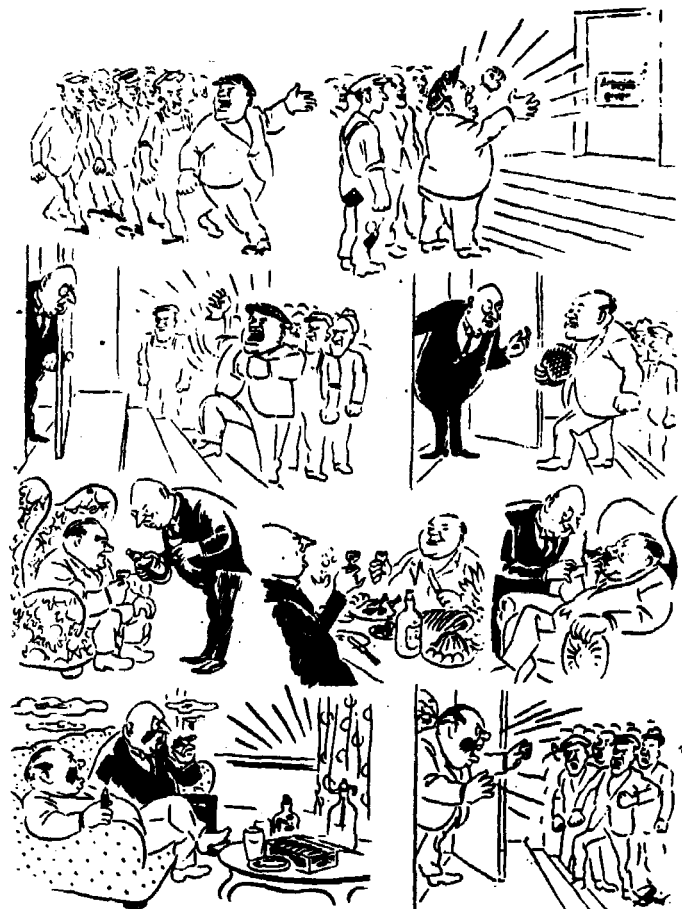
asures hurting the population, maintaining a strong state sector and state support for industry, and reviving defense production.

Protest votes

It should not be assumed that the Russians who backed Zhirinovskiy in the elections share all his views. The big LDP vote was essentially a protest against Yeltsin and his "reforms." The other main beneficiary of this protest was the Communist Party, but for many Russians the Communists were not an acceptable alternative. Parties of the non-Communist left are small in Russia, and failed to secure a place on the ballot.

People who wanted to express dissatisfaction faced problems deciding how to vote. Hoping to benefit his relatively well-organized supporters, Yeltsin allowed far

Continued on Page 22



From Zabastovka #1, March 1992

U.S.-Soviet Writers Information Committee

Shock Therapy

Continued from Page 9

too little time to build effective campaigns. "There has not been enough time to tell the parties apart, or even to understand who is running with which party," complained a columnist for the pro-government *Izvestiya*. The campaigning itself was mostly dull—talking heads mouthing vacuous programs.

The exception was the LDP. Zhirinovskiy's delivery was impassioned, and his arguments simple, categorical and often memorably outrageous. His listeners were either repelled or captivated.

Moreover, Zhirinovskiy's performances were hard to avoid. "He seems to have more money than any other party, and he appears on television several times daily in the most expensive time slots," the English-language *Moscow Times* observed. The source of the LDP's funding remains a mystery. Yeltsin's election rules failed to order that corporate contributions to election campaign funds be publicly declared.

New parliament has no real power

As the second largest bloc in the new parliament, Zhirinovskiy's LDP will be guaranteed publicity for its views. (Russia's Choice will be the largest bloc because it won more individual contests.) But under the new constitution, the parliament will be almost completely lacking in real powers. Without posts in the government—privatization minister Anatoly Chubais has said that cooperation with Zhirinovskiy is "absolutely out of the question"—the LDP deputies will command attention, but will not risk having their policies discredited in practice. As the collapse of the Russian economy continues, and the anger and alienation of ordinary Russians increases, Zhirinovskiy and his colleagues will build their profiles as champions of the common people and defenders of Russian interests.

The powers which Yeltsin has awarded himself in his new constitution have been described as amounting to "elective

ALEX CHIS/INDEPENDENT POLITICS



Candlelight vigil outside the notorious Lubyanka prison on October 30, 1993, the Day of Remembrance of Political Prisoners of the USSR.

monarchy." After Yeltsin, whose term expires in June 1996, who will be the next elective monarch? At present, the front-runner is incontestably Zhirinovskiy. As constitutional dictator of Russia, this erratic, fascist-like demagogue would control one of the world's largest nuclear arsenals.

There is nothing inevitable about this prospect. It could be thwarted, for example, by the broad rise of a militant labor movement, in alliance with a renewed political left. But if the disaster of a Zhirinovskiy presidency comes to pass, the blame will lie with Yeltsin, with Russia's liberal intelligentsia, and arguably above all, with the leaders of important Western countries.

Democracy dispensable

As they have implanted the power of big business in Russia despite a broadly skeptical population, Yeltsin and his backers have regarded democracy as dispensable. In his year-long campaign to weaken and destroy the old parliament, freely elected in March 1990 after the Communist Party had ceased to be a coherent political organization, the Russian president was urged on by world leaders including Kohl, Clinton, Major and Mitterrand, as well as by the liberal media

in Russia. Inevitably, the fragile traditions of respect for elected organs and for collective decision-making that had arisen in Russia since 1989 were crushed. The political culture that took their place was one of coups, of violations of the constitution, and of demagogic self-justification.

In September and October, 1993, open presidential dictatorship and the suppression by the armed forces of elected organs of government were added to the mix. Russia's dominant political tradition became several degrees more savage.

That many millions of Russians voted for a party preaching race hatred, national aggression and the summary execution of suspected criminals has come as a shock to most observers. But in view of what has occurred, it should not have.

Genuine democrats face forbidding odds

The Russians who voted for Zhirinovskiy are not lost to the human race, and the humane and progressive elements of Russian society have not met with total defeat. Despite concerted state pressure, writers for the Moscow liberal daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* continue to expose the government's attacks on democracy. On December 14 the paper's editor, Vitaly

Tretyakov, bravely pointed to the government's profound responsibility for the electoral triumph of the LDP.

Other intellectuals and labor activists are working within the recently-established Movement for Democracy and Human Rights in Russia. Nevertheless, the resources available to Russia's genuine democrats are small, and the odds they face are forbidding.

International solidarity is therefore critical. It must not flinch from pointing to Yeltsin's deep complicity in securing a powerful position for some of democracy's worst enemies. It must condemn, in the most uncompromising way, the crimes of the Western leaders who encouraged, aided and apologized for the Russian president's attacks on democratic institutions. It must demand an end to all harassment of opposition activists and publications. ▼

Russia Today

Continued from Page 10

ence.

Important inroads have already been made toward restoration. The economic plan has been abandoned, and market relations between enterprises have more and more replaced planning. The inconvertibility of the ruble, the state monopoly of foreign trade and the nationalization of the land have been done away with, at least juridically.

The next step in the process of restoration will be to close the least profitable plants and introduce significant unemployment. The goal will be to break the workers' resistance, and once again make labor into a commodity. The right to full employment, a gain of the former workers' state, has to be abolished and replaced with a real labor market complete with unemployment and competition among workers to sell themselves. Capital for privatization can then be attracted to purchase the labor power of the workers under these market conditions. A "strong state" will be needed to accomplish this, given the workers' resistance, and this is Yeltsin's project, as it is of the far-right

Russian national chauvinists and the "Communists."

Worldwide effects

Let's take a look at some of the effects this change has had on the class relationships of forces worldwide. There are two contradictory aspects, from the point of view of the working class. We'll take up the negative first.

There were always negative aspects of Stalin's international policies ever since the counterrevolution he led in the 1920s. Indeed, this counterrevolution as a program began by replacing reliance on world revolution (the policy of Lenin and the Communist International) with the theory of "socialism in one country" in 1924. The adoption of this "theory" was an attempt to survive by somehow making peace with world imperialism, since the program of world revolution was seen by the Stalinists as utopian.

The result was a long series of defeats of real revolutionary movements through policies imposed by Moscow. The list is long, but it includes failure to fight Hitler's putsch, the refusal to support working-class unity against the Nazis, betrayal of the Spanish revolution and civil war in the 1930s (by hog-tying the workers and peasants to the demands of the capitalist class), and calling off the French general strike in 1936.

Aid to world revolution

But the fact that the USSR remained a workers' state meant there was another aspect of USSR foreign policy. It resisted imperialist hostility—hostility born of the very fact that it remained a workers' state. Its resistance to the invasion of German imperialism during the second world war objectively helped the world revolution, and was partially responsible for the victory of the Chinese revolution and of the rise of the colonial revolution in general following the war.

The USSR gave material support to North Korea and China against the U.S. onslaught during the Korean war. It did the same during the Vietnam wars against France and the United States. It supported

Egypt in its 1956 confrontation with Britain, France and Israel when Egypt nationalized the Suez canal. It supported the Arab side in the 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel. It allowed Cuban troops to go to Angola in 1975 to fight against the South African-U.S. imperialist onslaught.

By atom-bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Washington sent the message to the world that not only did it have these horrendous weapons, it had the cruel will to use them against cities. But the fact that the USSR was able to develop atomic weapons blocked the U.S. from imposing its will on the world with the atomic threat.

In general, the existence of the USSR helped stay the hand of imperialism, even though the Stalinist regime always sought to bargain away the world revolution through deals with imperialism.

But with the collapse of the workers' state, no such aid to anti-imperialist struggles anywhere can be expected from the former Soviet republics.

Capitulation to Imperialism

Looking back, we can see that this change began in the middle 1980s, and had important negative effects on the world revolution.

One was the Kremlin's refusal to give any substantial aid to the revolution in Nicaragua and El Salvador, in spite of the imperialist-sponsored aggression against it. Cuban President Fidel Castro had to tell the revolutionists there that such aid would not be forthcoming, nor would the USSR back Cuba if Cuba intervened on their side. This was a factor in the retreat of the revolution in Central America.

Another effect was the abject grovelling before Washington during the attack on Iraq. The whole Gulf War would have been inconceivable just 10 years earlier; any such thing would have led to a major confrontation with the USSR, especially given the proximity of Iraq to the Soviet Union.

And now we have the "second blockade" of Cuba and an abandonment of the fairly equal trade which the USSR and East

Continued on Page 24

Russia Today

Continued from Page 23

Europe had with Cuba, compared with the ruthlessness of the imperialist-dominated world market. This blow, coming on top of Washington's blockade, has severely harmed the Cuban revolution.

Impact on "Third World"

When the Communist International argued in 1920 that it would be possible for the revolution in China to overleap the stage of capitalism and go directly to a soviet system, part of its reasoning was based on the existence of the Soviet Union.

Indeed, the Chinese revolution of 1949 would have faced enormous obstacles and likely massive imperialist intervention if it had not been for the victory of the USSR in the war.

The course of the Cuban revolution would have been far different if it were not for the existence of the USSR. It is unlikely that the revolution would have taken a socialist course if the Soviet Union weren't there to come to Cuba's aid with trade and oil when Washington put the squeeze on. Or, if it had, it is doubtful Cuba could have survived its early years as a socialist outpost 90 miles from the U.S. without Soviet military backing, however conditional and cowardly that backing was.

There are internal reasons why any anti-imperialist revolution in the capitalist semi-colonial countries tends toward becoming a socialist revolution. Those reasons include the inability of the native capitalists to really oppose imperialism or to carry out democratic reforms, such as giving the land to the peasants. The rich in the Third World also fear their own working class will strike out in its own interests if any kind of revolutionary struggle

is initiated.

But the fact that no help whatever can now be expected from the former USSR makes it much more difficult for semi-colonial countries to take the Cuban road. Indeed, it is more difficult for any anti-imperialist movement—the Palestinian struggle, for example.

One consequence of this new situation—for semi-colonial capitalist countries that are exploited and drained by rich capitalist lands—is that their revolutions must be more integrated with the workers' movement in the imperialist centers. Whatever difficulties in forging such links, winning over this support will be more crucial than ever.

The gap has widened between material situations in small, semi-colonial countries and those of larger, more developed countries. For example, if the Workers Party of Brazil should take power and lead the country in a socialist direction (leaving aside whether this is likely),

it would be far more difficult for the U.S. to intervene effectively there than was the case with Nicaragua.

Impact on Socialist Movement

The identification of socialism with Stalinism is another negative outcome of the blight of the Stalinist counterrevolution. By the end of the 1980s, the masses in Eastern Europe and the USSR had given up on socialism itself, and on the program of taking power into their own hands.

The result was the installation of capitalist governments with many of the same old faces, like Yeltsin's.

On an international scale, too, the identification of Stalinism with socialism has had a negative effect on the left. Of course, this identification has been harmful for decades, but before the 1980s, it appeared that at least the economies in the bureaucratized workers' states "worked," and the perspective of the working people overthrowing the bureaucracy and once again going forward toward building real socialism seemed possible.

The struggles of the workers in Hungary in 1956, in Poland the same year and in 1970, the Czechoslovakia "spring" of 1968, and the original aims of the massive Solidarity movement in 1980 in Poland all pointed in this direction. But by the end of the decade, socialism itself was discredited, not only by the lack of democracy and internationalism on the part of the Stalinist regimes, but by their utter failure to keep the economy moving forward.

Stalinist obstacle is smashed

The result throughout the world has been a setback for the left.

However, in the long run, the collapse and discredit of Stalinism has cleared the way for the renewal of the socialist movement, free of the crimes

U.S.-SOVIET WORKERS INFORMATION COMMITTEE



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and false "theories" of Stalinism.

The way is open for an objective appraisal of the true history of the Russian revolution and the Stalinist counterrevolution, and of the pernicious results of Stalinist practice on the world revolution since the mid 1920s.

The way is open for a return to the real program of Marx and Engels, which was never a dogma or theory imposed on reality, but grew out of the real movement

Russian Women Beware!

By CLAUDETTE BÉGIN

A frontal assault by organized religious groups against Russian women's right to control their own bodies is in progress.

While Russians are still waiting for the dream of capitalism, still waiting for the massive influx of capital they thought would come to invest in developing their country, the anti-women, anti-abortion groups of Protestant and Catholic varieties are pumping significant money into Moscow.

Focus on the Family sponsors videos in high schools and broadcasts daily on radio across Russia. The Right to Life Federation donates plastic fetuses, and Conversion Corps for Mary interns are harassing women at abortion clinics. They have gotten many government agencies, including Yeltsin's cabinet, to distribute their propaganda as objective materials. They are finding academics to set up institutes to assist the spread of their reactionary message.

And that's what it is, a language of reaction, the same type of repulsive language used at the 1992 Republican convention. It's pressing Russian women back into the home with their children while unemployment is rising and living conditions are worsening. And even worse, they are using the language of race war like the Nazis did: women should bear at least four children to ensure the superiority of survival of their ethnic group.

The irony and difficulty here is that

of the workers fighting for their own interests under capitalism.

The class struggle continues everywhere, including in the former USSR. A renewed socialist movement will arise out of that struggle, and it will be free of the Stalinist cancer. This positive outcome of the collapse of Stalinism will be its most important result over time. ▼

To Be Continued in Our next Issue

Russian women are predisposed to distrust what they perceive to be the ideas of Western feminism. Prior to and during the Russian Revolution, many aspects of feminist ideology were part of the Bolshevik program. A number of reforms boosting the status of women were implemented immediately after the revolution: easy divorce and marriage, legal abortion, free childcare and schooling. But Stalin later tried to reverse these by promoting the subordination of women in the "communist (traditional) family," even outlawing abortion for a couple of decades. Voices in the Communist Party said that Western feminists would take away social protections such as bad working conditions and forcing Russian women into the worst jobs with horrible hours.

The message of retreating to the home can have an appeal to women who are battle-weary from standing in lines, not getting the goods they need, and who have lost their access to child care. They haven't caught on yet to how cruel a hoax it really is, that it's a way of legitimizing the removal of social services, such as childcare, previously provided in Soviet Russia. It provides a very convenient rationale for the capitalist mode of social organization that says women must meet all the social burdens of "the home." This relegates them to the worst and least well-paid jobs (because they won't stop needing the money and will still seek jobs), and robs women of options they need to control their lives.

In the recent elections, the Women of

Russia party won over 8 percent of the vote. While it is unclear what this party exactly stands for, this is at least an indication that women are organizing for their priorities and are not accepting a role that takes them out of public life.

The Russian abortion rate is the highest in the world because of the total lack of availability of birth control, even condoms. Because of this, most women are not going to be made to stop having abortions so easily. However, more and more inroads can make it less available, and may push women away from being able to make their own decisions.

Why does it seem to always come down to this struggle over abortion? Because it has to do with how central a woman's right to choose is to the status of women. Reli-



gious reactionaries know how crucial it is to deny women access to controlling our own bodies.

The message of feminists with a socialist perspective is desperately needed in Russia. This message says women are equal as people and as workers. It values social needs as something society as a whole should provide, and it says women should have equal access to opportunity without being unevenly burdened. ▼

Readers interested in more information on the status of women in Russia should see the article by Katrina vanden Heuvel in the November 1, 1993 Nation.

A Step Forward for Health Care California Single Payer Initiative Filed

By ALAN HANGER

An 85-page initiative—The California Health Security Act—was filed with the California Attorney General at the end of 1993. Sup-

porters of the initiative are beginning to collect the one million signatures that will be necessary to put the single payer initiative on the ballot in November 1994.

Although 74 percent of the American public supports a single payer health plan, only 90-100 representatives in the House and a handful in the Senate support such a law. The others are either kept on a short leash by the health industry or support Clinton's plan to guarantee profits for the insurance companies through his "managed competition" scheme.

If there is little chance of single payer passing Congress in 1994, what should supporters do? We could hope for a change in Congress in 1996 or 1998 after people have had time to experience managed competition.

Or, we could learn from Canada. Canada's shift to a single payer health system covering everyone came about in steps. It was one province that instituted a single payer system first. That example of success, along with fierce battles including a doctors strike, eventually led to national legislation.

Activists in California feel there is nothing to gain by waiting for Clinton's plan to fail. While the concept of single payer is simple, the California initiative is long and complex because of the lessons learned from trying to reform the auto insurance industry. The Health Security Act legislates the insurance industry out of health care. History has shown it is impossible to regulate the insurance industry to the benefit of working people.

The basic features of the initiative are:

- An elected Health Commissioner to organize global budgets for hospitals and localities.

- A voluntary Consumer Council to oversee and protect the health consumers' interests. Language was designed by Ralph Nader so that the Consumer Council is beholden to individuals and cannot be bought by large corporate donations.

- Citizens would choose their doctor as an individual, a member of a clinic, or a health group. Doctors or clinics would bill the state for services performed, or on a per capita basis in a health group. They would be paid the current rate determined by the Health Commissioner's Office.

- Payment for all health services would be equal to what is currently spent for health care. Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans benefits, state and county hospital cost, amounts paid for health insurance by corporations, private insurance, and other sources would be paid by a special Cali-

fornia fund administered by the Health Commissioner. This amount would cover 90 percent of the cost of giving everyone in California health care. The re-

maining 10 percent will come from: a) tax on corporations that no longer have retiree medical expenses, b) a 2.5 percent surtax on individuals making over \$250,000, and c) a tax of 2.5 percent on all Californians' net taxable income.

- There would be no co-payments for service and a maximum of \$5 for prescription drugs.

Passage of The California Health Security Act can help educate working people that their future lies not in the market, but in a democratically-run collective effort to improve the human condition. ▼

Chicago schools *Continued from Page 7*

or not, thousands of other Black youth cannot be so easily deflected without some radical improvements to the city school system.

Public education in Chicago has become a primary and recurring site of rupture in an increasingly brittle social structure—a social structure based on racism and class inequality. At the same time, as the industrial and financial base of Chicago has narrowed in the last two decades, crises in employment, health care, and housing have also become permanent, further exacerbating racial antagonisms in the most segregated city in America.

For years, patterns of housing and school segregation were partially offset by decent employment for much of Chicago's working class. Thousands found secure jobs at U.S. Steel, Republic Steel, Inland Steel, Ford, Amoco, Sears, United Airlines, John Deere, Motorola, and leading companies in machinery, textiles, food processing, printing, transportation, and health care. However, as U.S. capitalism faced growing international competition Carl Sandberg's city with "broad shoulders" became the city with wide hips. In a kind of capitalist "fitness" program, companies "downsized," restructured,

merged, and contracted work out. The largest steel mills, farm machinery plants, and rail centers of Chicago closed down or moved out.

And since the 1974 recession, major trade unions like the steelworkers and the machinists have lost thousands of members. As a result, wages have plummeted and union contracts have been weakened or broken, leaving large numbers of Chicago residents with less income for housing, food, and other basic necessities.

Chicago's Class Act

Still, Chicago is an industrial city, a working class town. Rhetoric about America becoming a "service" economy cannot disguise the obvious fact that service workers need manufactured goods to service. However, such rhetoric often obscures the crucial role of production in the U.S. economy. "Downsizing" based on technological innovation may have replaced some of the largest factories of the 1960s, but in Chicago, at least, production and the number of workers involved in production remains roughly the same as 30 years ago.

In fact, more than one-third of the workforce in Cook County is involved in

direct manufacture, construction, or transportation and over 35 percent of those 825,000 workers are still members of trade unions.

Additionally, over 50 percent of production still occurs in plants of over 500 employees, providing a shared social experience for hundreds of thousands of Chicago-area workers. The number of service and governmental workers in Chicago (about 900,000) simply illustrates the tremendous productive capacity of the workforce: Given the technology of the 1990s, fewer workers can create more goods while the wealth created can subsidize a larger number of workers not directly connected to production.

Unfortunately, the working people of Chicago (and other cities) do not benefit from their increased productive capacity. Instead, class inequality increases as corporate owners pocket the profits and cut wages and benefits relative to the wealth created. Unionized manufacturing workers in Chicago earn over \$35,000 per year; service workers average about \$15,000. In the process of restructuring, money for schools—as well as money for housing, health care, and recreation—disappears into the coffers of the largest banks and financial institutions in America. Money available for socially-necessary institutions like public schools flows according to the overall class structure.

Thus, school systems in the Chicago area (like all demographics) reveal the class character of the region, explaining much about the roots of the Chicago school crisis. For example, Niles Township, a north-west suburb of Chicago, spends almost \$12,000 per pupil per year, but the Chicago Public Schools only spend \$3,000 per pupil per year.

The gross difference in resource allocation reflects the class basis of each community and largely determines the quality of schools and the educational outcome. Average achievement scores of the ACT college entrance exam in Chicago is 14; Niles' scores are routinely twice as high.

Where you live determines where you go to school. Where you work influences where you live. In Chicago, race largely determines where you live, where you

work, if you work, and where you can go to school.

Chicago's population is 40 percent white, 40 percent Black. Although 55 percent of Chicago residents own their own homes, most homeowners are white and many are over 50 years old. The majority of the African-Americans, on the other hand, are under the age of 25, not homeowners, and underemployed or unemployed.

Over the last three decades, the tax base for schools has all but collapsed with declining property values, brought on by white flight and the resistance to an alternative funding plan by redevelopers, suburban residents, and state legislators, who aren't interested in educating students who are people of color in their overwhelming majority. Consequently, under the current system of school funding based on property taxes, Chicago schools are chronically underfunded.

Class Crisis, Class Response

Chicago, of course, has more than enough resources to maintain and run a quality public school system. Chicago is still a major transportation and trade center. It is a world leader in food processing, machine tools, steel products, farm machinery equipment, petroleum products, and banking. In short, the wealth is there. The money for schools is there.

An immediate solution would be to implement a statewide equity in school funding, pooling the resources from all the school districts and requiring comparable expenditures per student. A more radical solution would be to levy a tax on all manufacturing in the state and divide equally according to student population. Such a radical proposal would not be popular with corporate Chicago, but would be one way to correct the unequal allocation of resources and a fairly direct way to slow the corporate theft of the wealth created by Chicago working people.

Or, perhaps Chicago could abolish the school property tax on single-family homeowners and instead tax the revenues of apartment rental companies, insurance companies, Realtors, and financial and trading institutions. Such a tax restructuring would balance the unequal tax

burden and easily meet the \$300 million annual shortage. Again, Realtors, bankers, and their paid politicians will reject such a proposal out of hand. Yet, these proposals are reasonable, would be popular, and are even legal in the State of Illinois.

Undoubtedly, other proposals could also ease the chronic financial crisis of the Chicago schools. Whatever the program, no real solution will arise without a broad, united campaign led by those most affected by the crisis. Black, Mexican-American, and Puerto Rican communities will need to build alliances with the Chicago labor movement. Such a united campaign could network nationally with other working class coalitions confronting similar problems.

Key to any alliance on the schools will be the participation of broad layers of African-American youth. Here, the school crisis of 1993 provides reason for optimism. 21st Century's initiatives demonstrate that many Chicago students are already disciplined and motivated. We can expect that thousands of Black and Latino youth will respond to any serious militant call to action. The efforts of militant students are only part of the solution, however.

A concerted effort by Chicago labor (manufacturing, service, and government) in alliance with teachers and the Black and Latino communities will be needed. Such a coalition could easily win referenda on the schools and organize a working class political party worthy of public support in School Board and City Council elections. Service workers, who oversee most of the accounting books of corporate Chicago, could help ensure compliance with tax laws passed by a working class city council and school board. Such an alliance would go far in ending segregation, social inequality and inadequate education in Chicago.

The race and class character of the school crisis indicates that Chicago's labor movement need to get its "big shoulders" into the job of saving the schools.▼

Lee Artz teaches Communication at Loyola University Chicago. This article is excerpted from a longer work. Laura Hermann, a member of the Justice Through Action Network at Loyola, provided research.

A Step Forward for Working People Sexual Harassment Ruling: A Major Victory for Women

On November 9, the Supreme Court came down with an important decision on sexual harassment in the workplace. The ruling registers advances made over the years in the struggle against sexism in this country.

It also represents an advanced understanding of what sexual harassment is since the Congressional hearings on Supreme Court Justice nominee Clarence Thomas. Anita Hill's courageous testimony elevated this issue to national debate.

The unanimous decision will make it easier for women to sue employers for discriminatory treatment on the job. Victims of harassment must simply show that they were subjected to an environment on the job that "would reasonably be perceived, and is perceived, as hostile or abusive." They would not have to prove that the harassment had injured them psychologically.

Nashville Case

The case concerned a woman manager, Teresa Harris, at a company that rents forklifts in Nashville. Her boss, Charles Hardy, repeatedly insulted her with such epithets as "dumb-ass woman." He was fond of dropping things and asking female employees to pick them up in front of him, as well as asking them to take coins out of his front pants pocket.

When Harris protested his conduct, he brushed her off saying he was only joking around. The last straw for Harris was when Hardy asked her in front of other workers if she had gotten business from a particular customer by offering him sex.

When Harris sued the company, a Federal District Court ruled that Hardy's behavior, while offensive, had not created an abusive environment because Harris had not suffered any psychological injury. According to this reasoning, if a woman is strong enough to survive the harassment, she cannot sue to stop it.

This is the reasoning that the Supreme Court overturned, under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Title VII makes it illegal "for an employer...to discriminate

By CAROLINE LUND

against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin."

In her opinion concurring with the decision, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote that the critical issue under Title VII "is whether members of one sex are exposed to disadvantageous terms or conditions of employment to which members of the other sex are not exposed." And this goes not only for sex, but for race, color, religion, or national origin.

Behind the decision

It might seem remarkable that this clearcut decision against sexual discrimination was unanimous, given the rightward shift of the Supreme Court in recent years. But the Court had virtually no other option. Mass consciousness has been so changed in this country as a result of the civil rights and women's movements that any weaker decision would have been open to ridicule.

Moreover, the Thomas/Hill hearings inspired thousands of women to file sexual discrimination suits. This court ruling will give encouragement to more women and may spawn more legal action.

Does this mean that the powers that be are now on the side of justice and that sexist discrimination is going to fade away?

By no means! Sexism is not just the product of the ignorance of backward individuals. It is fostered by capitalist competition and greed. Discriminatory treatment of women, Blacks, and Latinos is good for profits. The fact that women and people of color can be pushed into lower-paying, less desirable jobs is good for big business. If discrimination were wiped out, the wage scales and working conditions and educational possibilities of millions would be lifted tremendously.

The truth is, sexism—like racism—is rooted in our economic system. Despite

the laws and court decisions proclaiming equality and justice for all, the power of money encourages backward attitudes and practices in

all kinds of subtle ways. The employers need a pool of workers that can be superexploited because of their gender or skin color.

In fact, pundits for the status quo are doing their best to turn back the tide of advances against racism and sexism. They have promoted the phrase "political correctness," trivializing the fight for justice by distorting and making fun of it.

Corporations fear lawsuits

Virtually all of the large corporations have been forced to adopt programs against sexual harassment, but this is largely hypocritical. A big part of management's supposed zeal against sexual harassment stems from fear of the costs of being sued. Management will also try to pose as the champions of women and people of color in order to undercut the union.

Often management's anti-harassment programs can result in turning workers against each other. For example, where I work, in an automobile assembly plant, the company provides "training" regarding sexual harassment. People are told it is sexual harassment simply to look at a co-worker of the opposite sex! This has the effect of trivializing the problem and making male workers think it is not serious. Or male workers can be made to fear just normal interaction with female workers, thinking they might be written up for any little thing.

Working men and women, white, Black, and Brown, need each other in order to fight back against the war on working people by the rich. Solidarity can only be based on respecting the rights of all. Anyone can make a mistake and offend a co-worker. But if the victim then makes it clear she/he finds the behavior offensive, and if the behavior continues afterward, then it can no longer be just good-natured joking around. It is malevolent harassment, and must be stopped by workers sticking up for each others' rights.

The unions need to address the problems of sex discrimination and harassment in order to help turn around their stagnation and decline. They must not give this issue over to the bosses, who will use it

to confuse workers and turn them against each other.

This Supreme Court decision hands women an important weapon to continue the struggle for equality. ▼

Developing Organized Labor Support for Gay Rights

By TASSO GEIST

Prior to the 1993 National Lesbian/Gay March on Washington with one million participants, President Clinton backtracked on his campaign promise to lift the ban against gays in the military. Clinton's spineless response to the right-wing backlash dealt away gay rights by making protection conditional upon the requirement that gays remain closeted both on and off base.

Clinton's disappointing decision has only made most lesbians and gays more resolute in their determination to continue their struggle. For some, a lesson in independent politics is being drawn.

Many Gay Rights activists feel that there could have been stronger, more organized pressure placed on Clinton to live up to his promises. But changes do not come about merely through the limp level of political participation involved in dependency on Democratic party politicians. Fundamental change requires a mass movement based on grassroots organizing.

Key to that type of organizing is forging an alliance with organized labor. There are some examples of this alliance taking place. The Public Employees Union, for example, played a pivotal role in using their resources in 1992 to push for the defeat of a reactionary anti-gay proposition in Oregon. Support of the teacher's unions made a big difference in defeating the anti-gay 1978 Briggs Initiative in California. Regina Shavers, a shop steward for Local 1549 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) spoke as an official labor

representative to the April 1993 March on Washington.

A labor reception was organized at the AFL-CIO headquarters during the April march week. Shavers, Howard Wallace (a field representative of Hospital and Health Care Workers Local 250 and a founding member of the Lesbian Gay Labor Alliance of San Francisco) and other gay trade unionists participated in the reception. They and other leaders are helping to build an important national demonstration, the Stonewall 25 March on the United Nations, in June 1994.

Seeking alliances

As a result of a February 1992 conference on civil and human rights by the

Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the first SEIU Lavender Caucus Leadership Conference took place October 1-3, 1993, at Local 250 in Oakland, California. The conference held workshops discussing homophobic positions in the labor movement, identifying resources, and sharing experiences.

In an interview with *Independent Politics*, Wallace explained the importance of labor and gay movements linking up:

"The importance of organized labor support on gay issues is immense. This is clear when we look at labor's role in gay history. I would like to see this value appreciated more in the gay community and will work to see that stronger gay and labor alliances are forged. The stereotype of the Archie Bunker right-wing union type in the public eye, often created by ruling-class hegemony, is sometimes as equally destructive to possible mutually beneficial relationships as are the stereotypes against gays and lesbians."

"The other side," he continued, "is that, for the most part, lesbian and gay unionists usually take on progressive roles within their unions: struggling to move their unions away from authoritarian bureaucratic control and toward rank-and-file democracy." ▼



Asian women battle garment industry

The conditions are deplorable: dark and crowded factories hidden away from view, filled with children as young as eight cutting cloth and sewing on buttons; elderly workers paid as little as 50 cents an hour and others far below the U.S. minimum wage; workers forbidden to talk or go to the bathroom, facing innumerable on-the-job injuries and work-related illness due to poor working conditions—back pain, hemorrhoids, sore fingers, aching wrists, poor vision, breathing problems and stitching into their own hands; bosses keeping phony records to show labor inspectors and when they do get caught, forcing employees to pay the fines.

These working conditions aren't confined to the *maquiladoras* or runaway shops in Southeast Asia. In the San Francisco Bay Area, you only have to go as far as Second Street in San Francisco's South of Market district, or between 12th and 14th Streets in Oakland's Chinatown.

Ten Percent Union

The Bay Area is the third largest garment manufacturing center after New York and Los Angeles. According to the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), there are about 20,000 garment workers in the Bay Area. Only 10 percent belong to unions. The vast majority work in small shops that rely on immigrant labor, primarily that of Asian and Latina women, many of whom speak little or no English and are kept ignorant of the laws governing hours, minimum wages and overtime.

The way the system works, multi-million-dollar clothing manufacturers force small contractors to bid for jobs, usually at or below contract prices. The only way the contractors can maintain their existence is to pay far below the minimum wage, so they seek out workers who are the most vulnerable to exploitation and then maintain intolerable working conditions.

Despite the draconian conditions, immigrant garment workers continue to organize, to protest and struggle against the contractors and garment industry.

By SUZANNE FORSYTH DORAN

In a case in which many of these issues were brought to a head, 12 women at the Lucky Sewing Company, an Oakland subcontractor, were paid in bad checks when that company closed shop in 1991. The employer promised to make full payment, but the women later found out that the company had filed for bankruptcy. The clothing the women were sewing was destined for the exclusive boutiques of Jessica McClintock, one of the top 10 designers in California and the fifth-largest in San Francisco. These designer dresses were sewn and the contractor paid, yet the workers who often labored 12 hours a day, six days a week to make them were left with no jobs and months of lost wages.

AIWA

The women approached Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) for help. AIWA was founded in 1983 at the suggestion of San Francisco hotel workers who saw a need to strengthen the ties between the Asian community and unions, particularly around issues of concern to the predominantly Asian and immigrant workers employed in the electronics, garment and nursing aides industries.

Representing the women, AIWA asked McClintock to accept responsibility for the women's lost wages and pay \$2,000 of the \$15,000 in bad checks. McClintock sells her dresses at an average of \$175 each. Of that \$175, about \$10 a dress is paid to the subcontractor who in turn pays about \$5 a dress to the women who do the work.

McClintock, who reportedly grossed \$145 million last year, has refused to repay the garment workers. Although she admitted to the *San Jose Mercury* that "the apparel industry has always been one of the dirtiest in America," she doesn't believe that she should be held responsible. McClintock has gone so far as to claim that her company only does business with contractors who agree to abide by all labor codes and has labelled AIWA's vocal

campaign for corporate responsibility "intimidation and a blatant shakedown."

The McClintock standard is apparently very high. According to federal officials, 90 percent of contractors violate federal labor laws.

Reality is harsh

Whatever McClintock's standards for her workers may be in theory, reality is another story. AIWA reports that another McClintock subcontractor recently appeared on the federal government's list of contractors who owe back wages, this time to 22 workers. On the East Coast, members of the United Paperworkers union are also involved in a labor dispute with McClintock calling for a boycott of her products.

Supporters of the Lucky garment workers say that McClintock's attitude illustrates an industry-wide problem. Garment manufacturers claim they are not responsible for the conditions of workers in the industry because the actual sewing work is done by subcontractors. Goods manufactured in violation of wage, hour and child labor laws can be seized from the subcontractors by the Employment Standards Administration; however, a 90-day limitation makes this penalty hard to enforce.

While two California bills have come up in recent years that would have made manufacturers and their subcontractors jointly responsible for working conditions, both were vetoed by California Governor Wilson.

AIWA's tactics run from informational picket lines to a *New York Times* ad urging readers, "When you see Jessica McClintock's holiday windows this year, think about the reality behind them: sweatshop women facing a cold, grim Christmas." AIWA has organized spirited rallies attracting hundreds of supporters. Picketers are hard to ignore, banging drums and gongs, blowing whistles and chanting humorous slogans. Garment workers mingle with students from San Francisco State's Asian-American Studies program and members of unions and solidarity

groups such as the Asian Pacific Labor Alliance. Bright red banners sewn by the garment workers announcing their demands in Chinese and Korean are held high by the women.

The community is responding. Both the Alameda County Board of Supervisors and the Berkeley City Council have endorsed the boycott of McClintock's products and have vowed to investigate violations in the local garment factories as part of a major reform initiative. AIWA's protests against McClintock shops have spread to a dozen other cities across the country, including Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Seattle. The television show "60 Minutes" appeared at a recent protest to cover the story.

McClintock is feeling the heat. She has hired the anti-labor law firm Goldstein and Kennedy for advice, a rent-a-cop to

Charles Curtiss

By KATHLEEN O'NAN

Charles Curtiss, 85, died in Los Angeles on December 20. Curtiss was born on July 4, 1908. He had been a secretary to Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky while he was living in exile in Mexico in the 1930s. His wife, Lillian Curtiss, served as secretary for Trotsky's wife.

Curtiss had been one of the original Communists, along with James P. Cannon, who founded the U.S. section of the world Trotskyist movement in the early 1930s. He resigned from the Socialist Workers Party in 1950. He was one of the first of the founders of the U.S. Communist movement who felt the Bolsheviks had never developed a democratic method of replacing leadership.

He joined the Socialist Party USA in 1950. He held various party posts in California and was the editor of the SP's national newspaper, *The Socialist*. Curtiss remained active in the Los Angeles Local of the Socialist Party until his death.

His wife, Lillian, remained in the Trotskyist movement until her expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party in the 1980s. She died not long after that. ▼

stand guard at her store, and spies to videotape protesters. A garment industry spokesman has stated that Northern California manufacturers feel they are in a "state of siege."

Finally, after nearly two years of pressure, McClintock responded in late December with an offer. In what AIWA organizers are calling a partial victory, the Northern California Chinese Contractors Association has offered the women a "donation" of the approximately \$15,000 owed to them in back wages. However, the Association, made up almost entirely of McClintock's subcontractors, is requiring the garment workers to sign an agreement which in part states that the money is a donation, not back wages, and that Jessica McClintock was not responsible for any back wages. Although five of the women signed the agreement, another seven declined the offer because they felt McClintock's responsibility was the issue at stake. The women have been given an extended deadline until January 14 to sign the agreement.

AIWA would like to see more people informed about the issues facing immigrant workers and invites unions and other organizations to adopt resolutions endorsing their struggle and to publicize the boycott. AIWA encourages members of the labor and Asian community especially to join their struggle for justice. ▼

For more information contact: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, 310 Eighth Street, #301, Oakland, CA 94607, (510) 268-0192.

Miners' Victory

Continued from Page 3

to break rank with the BCOA throughout the strike and to sign agreements with the UMWA. The union was also able to negotiate an interim agreement with four coal companies comprising the Independent Bituminous Coal Bargaining Alliance (IBCBA). One of the provisions of this agreement was to recognize the UMWA automatically if a majority of miners at non-union mines signed union cards.

Still, the seven-month struggle was not

an easy one. BCOA publicly charged union members with violence for standing strong on the picket line. President Trumka called the accusations "inflammatory" stating, "The UMWA rejects violence. It is our members who are usually the victims of violence."

The miners' militant stand in the face of the coal operators inspired a flood of solidarity. UMWA members and their families traveled across the United States to speak at support rallies and stationed strikers in several major cities to organize solidarity. In September, a one-week San Francisco Bay Area tour by two striking Illinois miners raised nearly \$11,000 for the Miners' Relief Fund. Nearly 1,000 Australian miners, at the Ravensworth and Warkworth mines (operated and co-owned by Peabody Holding Company) walked off their jobs in a 24-hour strike in support of the UMWA on June 3. South African miners also staged solidarity actions.

With the strike over, Trumka said the UMWA will now expand its organizing efforts. "We think this contract victory will be a boon to organizing," Trumka said. "Over the course of this strike alone, more than 1,200 non-union miners have joined the UMWA." During the strike, the UMWA won six consecutive union elections among previously non-union miners and even managed to organize a number of public employees in a Wyoming town. The Mine Workers' ability to live up to its reputation as a union that fights to win was proven once again.

The UMWA's struggle is not over yet. The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear the UMWA's appeal of the \$52 million in fines levied by the Virginia supreme court following the 1989 Pittston strike. The fines are believed to be the largest civil contempt fine in American history. The settlement negotiated between the UMWA and Pittston included ending all litigation, but state judge Don McGlothlin refused to lift the penalty. A state appeals court ruled that the settlement between Pittston and the UMWA required all fines be vacated, but the Virginia supreme court reversed the appeals court. The case will be important in determining to what lengths state courts may go to control labor protests. ▼

Hate Crimes in "Democratic" America

Hate Crimes, The Rising Tide of Bigotry and Bloodshed by Jack Levin and Jack McDevitt, 1993, 287 pp.

By HAYDEN PERRY

This very timely book spotlights the hate crimes that baffle and horrify the country. What made a man shoot complete strangers on a train? The killer did not even know his victims. Hate was the motive, he tells us: hate so intense and overpowering that he must kill and kill again. Where does such hate arise in democratic America?

Levin and McDevitt say, "Learning to hate is almost as inescapable as breathing." From the earliest colonial days, group hatred has been part of the American ethos: "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." Slaves hated masters, and masters hated slaves, because they feared them. Early immigrants hated later immigrants as new competitors. This is zero-sum economic thinking: "If that group gains I must lose."

The authors point out that group hate

does not center on an individual. All members of a group are stereotyped equally. Any Black can be seized and taught a lesson. The victim might ask "Why me?" The answer can be "Simply because you are Black," or Jewish, or Gay.

Hate crimes are deadly

That is why hate crimes are so brutal and deadly. The victims are not seen as men and women, but as symbols of the feared and hated group. Pent-up bitterness and resentment about hopeless personal lives puts raging force behind the blows.

The authors point out that endemic hatred can be mitigated or even eliminated through social circumstances.

The Civil Rights fight and the student movement of the 1960s pushed race-haters to the fringes of society. Optimists believed America was outgrowing primitive race hatred.

But the tide has now reversed, the authors say. "Bigotry is back.... We are in the midst of a culture of hate: from humor and music to religion and politics." Stand-up comic Andrew Dice Clay refers to Asians as "urine-colored people with towels on their heads." Popular songs debase women as "bitches" and "whores." Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke is elected to state office in Louisiana.

Economic stress intensifies hate

While the culture of hate makes prejudice acceptable, economic stress intensi-

fies group hate to the point of violent action. The signs are visible in slogans heard everywhere: "Affirmative action puts Black incompetents ahead of qualified whites!" "Aliens are pouring over the border to take our jobs!"

While thousands may agree with these slogans, only a handful translate their hatred into violence. They are usually young men in gangs who have an ideology espoused by the KKK, the Aryan Brotherhood, or other hate groups. One former Aryan bigot told a hearing, "I was raised for one purpose and that was to terminate people like you."

Their shaven heads identify them with similar groups in Germany and Britain. In all three countries they are often unemployed youth who see no future and lash out at a perceived "enemy."

In June 1982, in Detroit, such sentiments climaxed in the murder of a Chinese man by two auto workers who thought he was Japanese. Convicted of the murder, the two men were only fined and put on two years' probation. The judge said they were "not the kind of people you send to prison."

Meanwhile, attacks on Blacks, Latinos, Jews and Gays mount up. From 1983 to 1987 Boston police compiled a list of 452 incidents of racial violence. Few of the racists have been prosecuted.

Need to organize

We must expect more race hatred as more Latinos and Asians wield political clout, the authors say. The Establishment sees benefits to race hatred. It deflects the rage of the common people safely away from the true enemy in Washington and Wall Street.

Levin and McDevitt are academics who present a well-researched and scholarly thesis. But they obviously are not in the streets themselves. They think the cure can be found within the existing social order: provide jobs, give youth intercultural experiences and recognize the multiracial nature of our society.

That's all good, but it will take convulsive social upheavals to overturn exploitive social values and bring fundamental social change. Only the mobilization of all the oppressed will end the disheartening, utterly destructive spectacle of worker bashing worker for the benefit of their common exploiters. ▼

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