

Build a Labor Front Against Reagan!

Break with the Democrats!

- No More Concessions!
- Against Unemployment —
Sliding Scale of Wages and Hours

US Out of Central America!

- Union Boycott
of Arms to the "Contras"!

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March on Washington, D.C. — April 20!



Labor Front Against Reagan

A march on Washington, D.C. is being organized by local coalitions all over the country. The April 20 Actions for Peace, Jobs, and Justice is an outgrowth of the Emergency National Conference Against US Military Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean held last October in Cleveland. For the first time in many years trade union representatives participated there in planning actions against Reagan's war in Central America. This is the significance of April 20 — to build a huge contingent of trade unions, Blacks and young workers, a massive labor contingent to march against the bosses and their man Ronald Reagan. All out April 20!

The enemy is not Nicaragua. The enemy is in the White House. Yes, Reagan was elected again — but as the famous union organizer Joe Hill said, "Don't mourn, organize!" April 20 is a good place to start, but what is needed is a united response of working people and oppressed, trade unions, and all organizations that claim to support the working class in action against the corporations, the banks, their take-back schemes, and Reagan. Build a Labor Front against Reagan and the bosses!

There is nothing to negotiate in Central America, the US must simply get out. The Reagan administration, which has supported every dictator and petty thug who will favor American capitalists' interests abroad, thinks it can tell the rest of the world what to do. They believe working people in this country are so meek that they will go along with anything. But they are wrong! The US has no right to impose any solution in Central America in the first place. In the second place, American working people do not support gangsters and brutal dictators. *US out of Central America!*

The average American worker finds the business of government in Washington so disgusting anyway that he doesn't realize the amount of his work that is being put into supporting American bosses' interests by military means — billions of dollars. That amount of production and resources alone would be capable of rebuilding Central America, eliminating illiteracy, and paying back a small measure of the grief that the US has caused the people of Central America. It could create jobs and rebuild the educational system in the US. All by itself it could practically eliminate every ghetto in the country. *Convert the military budget into a program of public works!*

Who are the "rebels" that Reagan talks about in Nicaragua? They are the ex-army of one of the most despotic and brutal mass murderers of all time — Anastasia Somoza, whose family ruled Nicaragua with the backing of the US for half a century. Workers in this country must understand that when Reagan labels these cowardly butchers as heroes,

he is glorifying an organization ten times worse than the Ku Klux Klan.

This is not because Reagan is unfamiliar with Nicaraguan history. It is because his administration is just plain racist and anti-worker, because it defends the interests of the most powerful capitalist class in the world. Against racism we must march in Washington to affirm the right to organized Black and worker self-defense. The right of trade unions to organize mass picketing.

In short, Nicaragua is our fight too. They are fighting the ex-army of Somoza, we are fighting the likes of the KKK. A blow for the Somozaists is a gain for us. Volunteers and material aid to defend Nicaragua! Union boycott of all arms destined for the "contras."

The AFL-CIO had a conference in Bal Harbour, Florida, last week. Some startling figures were issued to the Conference. While the number of jobs in the civilian labor force has grown by 5% from 1980 to the present, membership in the trade unions has declined by 13%! In that same time membership in the UAW has declined by more than 25%. The conclusion of the union officials shows just how they got into this mess in the first place. "The labor movement grew up during a period when there were millions of people who were being obviously and heavily exploited ... but most people who work for a living are not in that condition today," said Albert Shankar, president of the American Federation of Teachers. In other words, more concessions.

March on April 20 to turn around the union movement. Concessions — No! The

unions must organize the unorganized and the unemployed once again. They must be returned to the ranks to serve the interests of working people and not those of business and government. To the capitalists who scream for profits, we must answer jobs and a living wage. The working class has a solution to unemployment and the decline in its living standard — *the sliding scale of wages and hours, divide up the work, wages to rise with prices.* If the bosses cannot guarantee work and a living wage then expropriate their industries and put them under workers control.

In the past in American politics the political dividing line has been drawn between liberal and conservative, between Democrat and Republican. If the working class is going to survive, a new line must be drawn in American politics — between working class politics and capitalist politics, between the Democratic and Republican parties and a working class party. *Build a Labor Party based on the trade unions and the organizations of the oppressed. Break with the Democrats!*

A united front of working people against the bosses and their man Reagan, a Labor Front against Reagan, can prepare an opening for the working class to organize and mobilize again. More concessions will close the door. Every worker and young person must demand, "Who will put the interests of the working class above everything else? Who will fight the bosses and the racists?" The answer to that demand is simple, whoever will build a working class front against Reagan!



Part of the crowd of over 250,000 workers that demonstrated on Solidarity Day, September 1981 in Washington, D.C.

Open Letter to the Socialist Workers Party:

Common Fight for Working Class Candidate in Detroit

Dear Comrades:

We propose to you a fight for a common working class candidate for Mayor of Detroit in the Mayoral elections set for next Fall. The petitions are already out and the filing date is July 23. It is important to start now while workers are most interested in the situation in Detroit and in leadership. The situation demands the utmost *cooperation* on the part of yours, ours and other working class parties in advancing and defending the interests of the working class.

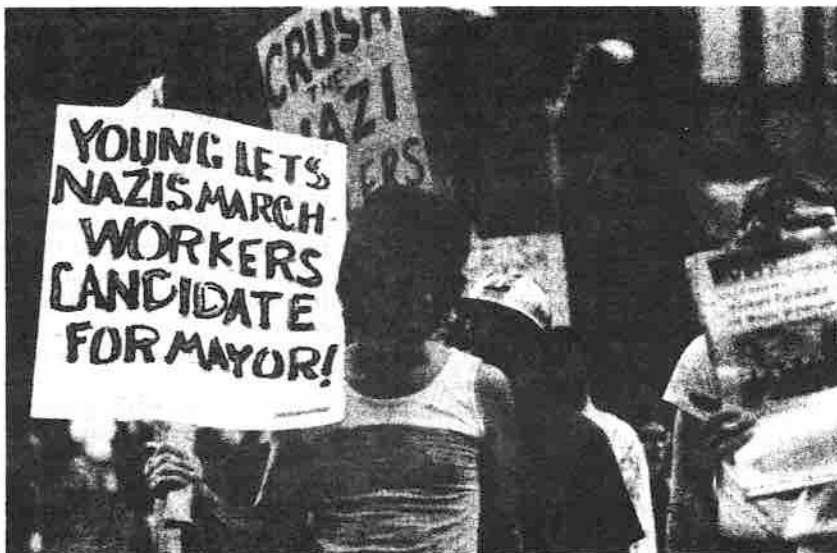
Coleman Young feels the ground cut from under his feet. Precariously staggering from one crisis to the next, the Detroit Democrats are proving they are utterly *dependent* on the banks and businesses that use Young to drain Detroit's life's blood. The only force that is *independent* of the banks and their stranglehold on all the money is the working class, its parties and its unions.

Stroh's Brewery and Vernor's Bottling Co. are closing and have thrown 1,400 more workers in the streets. Mayor Coleman Young has long oriented toward business interests and is now getting his just desserts. ANR, a corporation that owns a good part of the Ren-Cen and tax-free properties on the riverfront is likely vacating the scene and selling out to a large Texas gas corporation. This means their money will all go to Texas, not Detroit. So much for Young's pet idea of "saving" Detroit through financing business concerns with working class dollars.

This is no new idea, it was first advanced by Reagan — the trickle-down theory (otherwise known as Reaganomics) whereby business and industry gains would trickle down to workers if they would only give up a little now (concessions) in order to get more later. Nothing has trickled down — actually all those profits made at the workers' expense (i.e., record-breaking auto profits) are being invested elsewhere — the workers standard of living has plummeted downward under the Young administration.

Although on March 7 in Selma, Alabama, Jesse Jackson boasted that "now there are 260 Black mayors" nothing has changed for the better for the majority of Blacks; conditions for them have worsened beyond reform, proof that having Blacks in capitalist government instead of whites is *no solution*.

That is why we propose to collectively fight for a common candidate representing the working class with you and other parties who are for a Labor Party: mobilizing in our unions and in the neighborhoods against Coleman Young and for a working class solution to the devastation of Detroit by the clique around Young and Co. We write to you because although your campaign in the presidential elections was not an *active* fight



Trotskyist Organization's Mayoral candidate demonstrates against Nazis that Mayor Young allowed to march in Detroit, August 22, 1981.

for a Labor Party, neither did you support Democrats as did a large number of working class parties. Those who did not support Democrats and in any way raised the question of a Labor Party in the elections, those parties, and we include our own, must take a step forward from there. Advancing a common candidate in the Mayoral elections in Detroit, important elections for the whole country, is a way to do that.

We know you have already begun Mayoral campaigns in other cities (New York, Los Angeles) and that your candidates oppose the war in Central America. That alone is at least one basis for working together. A good programmatic basis for a Labor Candidate should include: a Labor Party based on the unions; a sliding scale of hours and wages to make sure all workers have a job and that wages will go up with the cost of living, and a union mobilization against the war in Central America.

But in Detroit, where we have been working in the April 20 coalition along with your members for a march to take place on that date in Washington, we saw that your members included Coleman Young as a proposed speaker at a supporting rally in Detroit set for March 30. We believe that a "broad campaign" means one aimed at the majority who happen to be workers and poor people, not Democratic Party politicians. We are not looking for "big names" to support a fight for a working class candidate in Detroit, we are looking to all the hundreds and thousands of "little names" who genuinely want to change Detroit for the better, the hundreds and thousands of workers and poor people, youth and women workers and the unemployed suppressed by the monopoly the two capitalist

parties have on the elections.

In 1981 we made a similar proposal to you for common candidate. You responded in an off-handed way, in essence, "you do your thing, we'll do ours." This extremely sectarian attitude proved to be an obstacle to representing the interests of the working class in the elections in as large a way as possible. You put the interests of your own organization above those of the working class as a whole.

So why are we now asking you to make a common struggle for a working class candidate? The simple answer is that it is what the working class needs.

In 1981 Coleman Young bragged that nobody beside him could get 2,500 votes in Detroit. Your candidate got 1,600 votes and ours got 1,300 which would have been a collective total of 2,900 votes. You may scoff and say that "votes are not important, what is important is getting out the truth." But truth is connected to votes. We found out that the truth is, those who voted for both your candidate and our candidate were from the Black working class districts on the east and west sides of Detroit, debunking the notion that since they have Coleman Young, Blacks will not vote for independent working class candidates.

In the program you say you defend, the Transitional Program of the Fourth International, it says "The Fourth International declares uncompromising war on the politics of the capitalists" and that is the intention of our proposal to you. Given the situation, and the fact that petitions are already circulating, an early response is important.

**Detroit Local Committee
Trotskyist Organization**

10 Years of Struggle for a Working Class Party

On February 9 the Trotskyist Organization held a public meeting of militants and young Truth subscribers in commemoration of its founding 10 years ago. We are printing below the text of the first half of the speech delivered to the meeting by the National Secretary of the Trotskyist Organization, David Mark, that analyzes the lessons of the struggle for a working class party over the last ten years. The second half of the talk will be continued in the next issue of Truth.

In addition to the speech we are printing greetings sent to the meeting by the International Secretariat of the Fourth International and excerpts from Richard Tetrault's remarks to the public meeting. He is the organizer of the Chicago Committee of the Trotskyist Organization.

We have been in existence as the Trotskyist Organization for ten years. Issue Number 6 of *Truth* dated February of 1975, carries the headline "The Fourth International Exists and Fights." The first paragraph says that in a special conference in January of 1975 the Trotskyist Organization was founded. The question of the exact date is not important. But we did undergo a fundamental change ten years ago.

First of all, on that date we really began to undertake the task of rebuilding the revolutionary workers party in the United States. It was really the beginning of that struggle for us. We ceased being a small group of American Marxists, and we became part of an international movement with a past and a future.

Now some of you here are not old hands at this business, so you are new to the revolutionary movement, and you may think that Marxism is foreign to the United States. That is not even half true. In fact the first Marxist international, founded by Karl Marx and Engels, resided in New York City — in the United States. Marxism is not foreign to the United States. And when we joined the fight to rebuild the Fourth International we had one purpose, to renew that link with the revolutionary tradition and party of the American working class.

You can go on from the First International to the Second International. American socialists like Eugene Debs. He ran for president from a prison cell in Atlanta and he received almost two million votes. Or if you want to look to the American Trotskyists you would have to look to James P. Cannon. As a leader of the early American Communist Party, he came out of a period in the history of the United States with which we all might not be familiar. When those who espoused socialist ideas and revolutionary ideas were persecuted and imprisoned. Cannon and others hailed the October Revolution, came out of underground, and founded an open party called the Workers Party after World War I.

And then Cannon led the fight for the American Left Opposition which rallied to found the Fourth International after the degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

This is our past. This is our continuity. It shows that Marxism has always had roots in the American working class movement.

For our own party and our own organization, as far as important dates, there really aren't any that are more important than February of 1975, because at that time we set ourselves an objective, rebuilding the Fourth International in the United States, that's still before us.

Therefore this meeting is really part of a living struggle. It is very definitely not a memorial. It is a living struggle to establish a link between the revolutionary and Marxist traditions of the past and the present generation of the American working class.

When we started out to build a workers party in this country, when we founded the Trotskyist Organization, we didn't know how everything was going to turn out. And even at this time most of us were pretty new at this. We really didn't know all the answers at that time but one thing that I can say about us, which is in our favor, is that we jumped right into the fight.

Trade Unions

In this country if you talk about jumping into the struggle of the working class you are talking right away about the struggle in the trade unions. In some respects we are liked and disliked, known and respected, for what stands we took in trade union struggles in our early years.

I have a picture here to give you an idea of what I mean by jumping into the thick of it. This is a crowd, or really a portion of a crowd, of about six hundred to a thousand workers outside the Ford River Rouge plant in Detroit. What you'll see, this is during the 1976 automobile strike, somewhere right in front, is comrade Barbara, who is passing out a platform we had for the strike.

The other thing that is interesting about this picture is not what you see, but what you don't see. There are big signs here that say "On Strike for Justice." These were the picket signs that were passed out by the union, the official picket signs. And then you will see a lot of white pieces of paper that workers were holding and screaming about. Well those were our leaflets, and the *Detroit Free Press* very generously air brushed out what they said because they didn't want anything but the official signs of the trade union leadership to be seen at that time.

We were fighting for a new leadership in the trade unions, the organizations which are the central gains of the American working class and the only mass organizations that they have right now. So we thought we would

go to school first with them. And that's where we began to take up a fight for a leadership.

We didn't just jump into the strike after it already started and play the role of cheerleaders. That is not what a party is for. A party tries to foresee, to lead, and to put forward a program.

In another issue of *Truth*, prior to the strike, the headline says "Oust the bureaucrats, youth take the leadership, vote for the platform and candidates of the Trotskyist Organization."

And we got somewhere. The comrade who was running at this local got something like several hundred votes. I don't know what the exact figure was but we did begin to prepare a leadership of the strike.

"We want a fighting party and that is the difference between us and other political organizations claiming the support of the workers. The difference . . . does not arise just because we declare for the final revolution and they do not, nor because we are willing to hold before the workers the final goal and all of these others are not, but because, upon the basis of the class struggle, on questions of bread and butter, on housing, on labor organization, wages and hours, they are afraid to fight, and the Workers Party says it will fight on every single one of these issues." (James P. Cannon, *Speeches for Socialism*).

We were not isolated during these days. Internationally there was an upsurge in the working class and this had its expression in the United States. The Salazar dictatorship in Portugal had been overthrown and we thought that there was going to be a revolution on the Iberian peninsula, and that it could ignite the European Revolution. We went forward on that basis and we tried to build a world party to lead that. These were the conditions under which we rebuilt the Fourth International as an international center in 1976.

The world situation took its expression in the United States in a strike wave in '75 and '76, certainly in the auto strike in '76.

Six months before the auto strike, we ran a comrade for president of a local. Then, we are right in the middle of a strike putting forward a platform for it. Not more than six months later, you can read a headline in *Truth* which says, T.O. member elected steward. A member of our party was elected a steward of Local 79 of the SEIU. So we set out to make a fight for the leadership of the trade unions and we did. We had some significant successes.

Continued on next page

It is interesting that the platform we won the SEIU election on was this — oust the bureaucrats, down with the capitalist parties, for a workers candidate in 1976. Our platform in 1984 was similar, a fight for labor candidates against Reagan. So we have been fighting for a leadership, a break of the trade unions from the Democratic Party, and a Labor Party for some time.

Fighting Party

The man I mentioned before, James P. Cannon, in his founding speech to the Workers Party said:

"We want a fighting party, and that is the difference between us and other political organizations claiming the support of workers. The difference . . . does not arise just because we declare for the final revolution and they do not, nor because we are willing to hold before the workers the final goal and all of these others are not, but because, upon the basis of the class struggle, on questions of bread and butter, on housing, on labor organization, wages and hours, they are afraid to fight, and the Workers Party says it will fight on every single one of these issues." (James P. Cannon, *Speeches for Socialism*). We were a party that was really willing to go out and make a fight in the unions. There were plenty of people who were ready to talk, to sit around and talk about socialism or what have you. We jumped right into the trade unions and presented ourselves as a fighting leadership to the American working class.

Take a look at another party during this period, the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP was at one time a revolutionary party in this country. In that period, which was not an easy one for us by any means, even though there was a struggle going on, the other parties — we call them centrist parties because they were in the middle of the road instead of clearly taking a side — they wouldn't even defend us against physical attacks by the trade union leadership and their goon squads.

And we don't make those kind of accusations lightly. That is a serious accusation in our movement. But it is true.

Even though the SWP was ten to our one in terms of militant resources in Detroit, we would sell up to forty papers in a night at the Rouge plant. How could we do that? Was it because the workers were saying, well the Trotskyist Organization has this position and that position — no — it was that we were a fighting leadership, we were willing to go out and make a struggle for workers demands on the bread and butter questions.



Greetings to Anniversary Meeting

From Richard Tetrault, Organizer
Chicago Committee,
Trotskyist Organization

We have heard a great deal about the history of the struggle of the Trotskyist Organization, about its formation in 1975, about great struggles and difficult times throughout the last half of the 70's to the present time. But it is not only the history of those that were active participants. It is a history that belongs to every worker and young person because above all it is the history of the struggle to build a working class leadership against the Democrats and all the failed leaderships in the workers movement.

It has also been the history of the struggle to build an international leadership for our class, to unite our struggles with those of our brothers and sisters in every country on the planet.

Before joining the Trotskyist Organization, I had no clear political ideas. In fact I was turned off by what I perceived to be politics — greedy leaders, corruption, war makers, and preachers. My vision of the trade unions in the US was similar — that they were ineffective and sometimes treacherous. So for me, the road to becoming a revolutionary began with first understanding some very fundamental truths.

First, the politics of the generals, bankers bosses and preachers is one particular kind. The form of politics they exercise is designed to protect themselves and to meet their needs and theirs alone. Their power is based on our oppression. And to confront them, we need our own political power and our own political party. This is very important and it forms the basis for all the struggles that the TO engages in.

Secondly, it was very important for me to see that the trade unions play a crucial role in the workers movement. No one can disagree with the statement that the unions are in crisis, that the present "official" leadership in the unions routinely betrays the workers struggles. What we must discuss is how the unions can once again be vital and powerful tools to the workers movement.

The rebuilding of the trade unions and the fight to construct a working class political party are so tightly connected that they really are inseparable. Rejuvenating the unions means first a break from the Democratic Party and its policies of class collaboration, and the struggle to build a workers party, or a labor party as we call it, rests on the alliance of the working class organizations to fight for the independence of the working class in our movement as a whole and in the trade unions in particular.

It has been my experience in working with young people that they have many of the misconceptions about politics and the work-

ers movement that I once had. These and all other forms of misinformation must be eliminated from our movement by educating and training the workers and youth in working class methods.

From the International Secretariat of the Fourth International

Dear Comrades:

Please receive the fraternal salutation of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Trotskyist Organization.

Our greetings are all the warmer since the reactionary American law has always prevented your organization from presenting itself as a section of our international.

We know however that a secret report in October 1984, proposed to Reagan and the National Security Council — among other economic, diplomatic and military measures designed to isolate revolutionary Nicaragua — to "act so that the American trade unions and other organizations of the workers movement will contact corresponding organizations in Europe and Latin America and obtain public declarations criticizing the elections in Nicaragua."

Look at the cynicism of those who want to prohibit the American workers from taking up the banner of the International.

And this is why we want to salute the struggle of the Trotskyist Organization, of *Truth*, and of all the young people and workers who come to this meeting to build a Labor Party. The party that will separate the American working class from the Democratic Party politicians and those who are corrupted and have countersigned the letters and the dictates from the slave masters in Washington. A party that will lead this working class against them and open the road to a workers government.

And it is also why we salute the struggle of the Trotskyist Organization in defense of Trotskyism and for the rebuilding of the US Section of the Fourth International. We are sure that you will find the road to the American youth and that this will give to the world proletariat its strongest revolutionary detachment.

Warmest greetings,

The International Secretariat of the Fourth International

Workers Front to Defend Nicaragua —

Part 2

By FRED MICHAELS

In our last issue, we raised two points in answering the rejection of our application to participate on the work brigades to Nicaragua. The first, which we developed in that issue, was that the "facts" disputed by the local coordinator were wholly in our favor. The second was, that if one of the points raised *against* our comrades is raising a campaign for involving the masses of working people in the brigades, what exactly are the brigades for?

Since our last issue, the Reagan administration has elevated its attack on the Nicaraguan Revolution by openly declaring its goal — the overthrow of the Sandinista government, that is, the crushing of the revolution accompanied with the threat of using US troops.

In this context, a discussion of the role of the work brigades becomes even more important for future work in defense of Nicaragua.

First, it must be clear that the elementary duty of every working person, every union, in response to these threats is the largest possible mobilization for the April 20 demonstration in Washington, D.C. to defend the Nicaraguan Revolution.

Second, this unprecedented attack by Reagan and Secretary of State Shultz shows the need for a call for material support and volunteers to the international working class from the Sandinistas. The work brigades are currently not part of such an effort. They are at best a symbolic act whose only real role is to put pressure on the Democratic Party not to support the war and to block the development of a real campaign for brigades of volunteers.

Lest anyone think that we are exaggerating the depth of Reagan's commitment he said: "Nicaragua is a communist totalitarian state" that "must be removed in the sense of its present structure." Shultz's remarks before Congress were explained by a senior State Department official who said that "Shultz's comment referred to a possibility of sending US troops if the . . . contras fail to force the government to change its course."

The response of the Democrats followed the prescribed pattern. They disagreed with Reagan over *tactics* while affirming agreement on the *goal* — crushing the revolution. One congressman declared in "opposing" aid for the contras, "it seems like its our terrorists against their terrorists." And others refer to the "possibility" of "solving our problems in Central America" at the "negotiating table rather than on the battlefield." (Rep. Solarz, Democrat, NY, quoted in the *Detroit Free Press*, February 23, 1985).

Most important for the revolution has been the response of the Sandinistas. Internally, price supports for food have been removed causing price increases on basic foodstuffs for workers and the poor. And in response to Reagan's and Shultz's threats, they offered a "peace initiative," consisting of expelling 100 Cubans and refusing to purchase any more weapons. The Sandinista government also invited Congressional delegations to show that their defenses are "only defensive."

These moves by the Sandinistas only serve to isolate the revolution from the workers of the world, instead of drawing them closer.

And, thus, these moves weaken the revolution.

The work brigades are part of this foreign policy of the Sandinistas. It is no accident that the response of the coordinators of the brigades to a proposal to openly mobilize working class people for the brigades would be grounds for rejecting us from the brigades altogether. As the application states, "Unfortunately, we will not be able to accept all applicants. The number of spaces on harvest brigades is limited . . . The brigades are intended to help as many North Americans as possible find out about the Nicaraguan reality for themselves." People are encouraged to apply who have not yet formed an opinion about the correctness of the revolution. No funds are ever raised to subsidize working people. A screening procedure exists to weed out those who "are convinced they have the correct political line." At best, they are symbolic and self-limiting. And in the present situation, they are an impediment to a serious mobilization for brigades of volunteers.

How serious an impediment they are can be seen by the position of the Socialist Workers Party. In an article about a convention held in New York City, *The Militant* refers to "thousands of young people who have participated in volunteer work brigades in Nicaragua." (*The Militant*, January 25, 1985)

The implication is that there has been a real mobilization to defend the revolution that has been expressed through the brigades. The cost of one person participating in a brigade is at least \$700.00. In 1983, 650 participated through the Nicaragua Exchange. There has been no mobilization of rank and file trade unionists or any union funds appropriated for the brigades. This line about "thousands of young people" is designed to cover up for the failure of the policy pursued by the Sandinistas and supported by the SWP to achieve any kind of serious mobilization in defense of the revolution, of class solidarity.

Now more than ever, the Nicaraguan Revolution needs a call to the international working class for material aid and volunteers from the Sandinistas. No other class will defend the revolution. No other class is capable of standing up to US imperialism. Join us on April 20 to build class solidarity with the Nicaraguan Revolution.

Protest our exclusion from the work brigades by sending letters to:

Nicaragua Exchange
239 Centre Street
New York, NY 10013

Nicaragua Embassy
c/o Amilcar Navarro R.
1627 New Hampshire N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

Letter to the First Secretary of the Nicaraguan Embassy

Dear Amilcar:

I am writing to you to ask you to overturn the decision of the Nicaragua Exchange rejecting my application for the work brigades.

When you came to Detroit last July to speak at a street rally that our coalition organized, I interviewed for our paper, *Truth*. At that time you said, "If you defend Nicaragua, you are welcome in Nicaragua."

But the Nicaragua Exchange feels differently. They do not disagree that I defend the Nicaraguan Revolution. Rather, they are not allowing me (and another comrade from Chicago initially supported by her local coordinator) to participate in the brigades on the grounds that *Truth* criticized some of CISPES activity.

Furthermore, I am criticized in the local coordinator's letter for advocating a "mass mobilization" of working class people for the brigades. If the brigades are not to defend the Nicaraguan Revolution through a concrete act of class solidarity, what are they for?

We are putting all our resources toward building the April 20 demonstration that is against the war in Central America. I am currently treasurer of the Detroit local coalition precisely because we believe in utilizing every opportunity to defend the Nicaraguan Revolution.

Overturning this decision, a decision that rejects a working class militant, can be a means to deepen and extend the support that exists among US workers for Nicaragua.

In class solidarity,

Fred Michaels

Workers Opposition in Poland

By MARGARET GUTTSHALL

The threat of a 15-minute national strike on Thursday, February 28, forced the Jaruzelski regime in Poland to postpone raising food prices 12 and 13 percent.

This is the fourth in a series of partial victories for the Polish working class and "underground Solidarnosc," the workers' union, against the Jaruzelski regime, the military police dictatorship that was established with the December 13, 1981 coup d'etat, in which thousands of workers were arrested, imprisoned, tortured and killed and Solidarnosc was banned.

Last fall Jaruzelski was forced to declare a general amnesty. In December, he was forced to release Bogdan Lis, leader of the underground Solidarnosc coordinating committee. And in January, the trial that Jaruzelski and the Catholic Church had planned to attack militant sectors and to *white-wash* the regime (the trial of the Polish secret police agents who murdered Jerzy Popieluszko, a pro-Solidarnosc priest at the Huta Warszawa steel mill in Warsaw) turned into a trial *against* the regime. As one worker who was asked to go home after the trial was over said: "It may be over for people like you (referring to the policeman who asked him to leave), but it's not over for me and it's not over for the people."

These partial victories for the working class against the Jaruzelski regime show that the time is ripe to form a *working class opposition* to fight for the rights of the working class (freedom for Solidarnosc and all working class parties), defend the gains of the socialist revolution in Poland and *bring down the Jaruzelski regime*.

Poland is different from the United States. Capitalists no longer own the factories and the land. After World War II, the Soviet bureaucracy was forced to take the factories and some land away. Now the state owns the factories, some of the land, plans the economy and controls foreign trade. Capitalists cannot just walk into Poland, set up shop and start exploiting people as they do in the United States and elsewhere. In this sense, the Polish state is a *workers state*, albeit an extremely deformed and degenerated one, for the masses of workers do not run the state. It is run by a parasitic, privileged and dictatorial bureaucracy, similar to the one that runs the unions in the US.

But all the gains of the socialist revolution, as well as the possibility of revolutionizing the workers state and fully establishing workers democracy, will be lost without the formation of a working class opposition to bring down the Jaruzelski regime.

A faction is forming within the Kremlin (the headquarters of the international Stalinist apparatus to which Jaruzelski belongs), led by Gorbachov (second to Andropov, second to Chernenko and a KGB agent), that more and more openly advocates the reintro-

duction of capitalist exploitation into Poland and other countries. In a recent declaration, Gorbachov calls for "profound reforms" in the economy which he describes as the development of private property and accumulation in the countryside, a loosening of planning in favor of the market and a differentiation of profits (*La Aurora*, January 11, 1985).

In another article, Ambarzumov refers to the workers' uprisings in Berlin in 1953, in Budapest in 1956, in Prague in 1968, in the Baltic Coast of Poland in 1970 and throughout Poland in 1980 and says: "We must apply the lessons of Kronstadt in 1921."

After an uprising against the workers' power in Kronstadt in 1921, Lenin and Trotsky put down the uprising, but decided certain concessions to the peasants — to their desire to have their own businesses and make money — were necessary in order to maintain the workers' power.

But Gorbachov, Ambarzumov and Co. are not interested in maintaining the *workers' power*. Lenin and Trotsky defended the independence of the workers' unions from the state, fought to extend the revolution throughout Europe and saw the measures that they took simply as temporary concessions. Gorbachov, Ambarzumov and Co., on the other hand, crush independent unions in the USSR and Poland, they oppose the extension of the revolution and want to create a whole class that is *hostile* to the working class, oriented toward getting ahead at the expense of others and indebted to the Kremlin and imperialist capital. Their "reforms," their "concessions," are oriented toward generating assistance in and support for *crushing the Polish workers*.

Jaruzelski is not only incapable of defending the Polish workers against the Kremlin's plans to sell Poland to the highest bidder, he is an integral part of them. Solidarnosc arose because of the exploitation of the Polish working class introduced by the bureaucracy. The Jaruzelski regime arose on the basis of the beaten bodies of the best leaders of Solidarnosc.

The recent partial victories of Solidarnosc show that the days of the Jaruzelski regime are numbered. It has nowhere to turn but to the Kremlin and to the imperialists, to solicit their support and strengthen their numbers against the Polish working class, no doubt in the name of freedom, the same kind of freedom, the same kind of freedom that Reagan talks about.

This is why the formation of a working class opposition to bring down the Jaruzelski regime and open the road to the formation of a workers government is so urgent.

The Fourth International and its Polish section, the Revolutionary Workers League, have already begun this fight. This is not only a way to unite working class organizations

against the regime, it is a way to build a Trotskyist party to lead the struggle to a successful conclusion. Trotskyists are the only ones who unite the struggle for the socialist revolution against capitalism in the West with the struggle for the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy in the East. And this is what is needed today.

You can support this struggle by making a contribution to the International Workers Fund to help finance this work.

Global Conflict

Britain

A wildcat strike in Kent and Scotland of about 8,000 miners continues the British coal miners' bitter year-long struggle in defiance of their national union calling off the strike. They vow to stay out until about 700 miners arrested during the strike are granted amnesty.

The central demand of the strike was to keep coalfields open that have been labeled "unproductive" by the state-owned National Coal Board. Closure of these coalfields will result in the loss of 20,000 jobs. In late February, the Trades Union Congress, the organization that represents all the unions failed to agree on formally ending the strike. In the aftermath of the divided congress meeting, substantial numbers of miners began to return to work across Britain convinced that if the other unions did not support the strike, it had no chance of victory.

According to the *New York Times* of February 26, labor leaders of the Trades Union Congress drew up a proposed settlement that was rejected by the miners' union causing a bitter rift between the miners leaders and the Trades Union Congress. "None of Britain's other major unions have taken effective industrial action to help the miners" stated the *Times* article.

With the exception of the Kent and Scotland miners, most of the 189,000 mine workers grudgingly returned to work wearing badges saying "I did not scab." This defensiveness is sad because it is not the miners' fault in any way that the strike was lost, that they were not militant enough. The real problem was not the miners nor even particularly Arthur Scargill. It was more than anything else the result of other union leaderships turning their backs on the miners' strike, and their reformist illusions in the Thatcher government.



Playskool and Women's Day, 1985

By SUE FROSCHHEISER

The acquisitions of workers and their families over the last 50 years are underlined by determined and sometimes vicious struggles.

This has been particularly true for women in their struggles: voting rights, abortion rights, the rights to a decent jobs and leisure time. And the battles that have been won by women over the years, may be characterized by militancy and independence of thought and action. In the discussions to prepare the conference marking International Women's Day 1985, discussions which began with the first meeting of the Committee last November 11, a debate has emerged on the fundamental direction in which the women's movement can advance. Despite the efforts of bourgeois feminists to tie the women's movement to the Democratic Party, real advances for women in this country are directly tied to the struggle for full and equal employment.

But isn't it true that we are fighting for jobs? retort the liberals. Of course! They can look to the Equal Rights Amendment, scores of congressional jobs bills and a growing list of congressional and local hearings on unemployment. They can produce volumes of written and spoken words from nearly every Democratic Party politician about the necessity for jobs and all the benefits associated with full employment. Yet, they cannot provide the slightest proof that all the rhetoric and campaigning have advanced the worker, particularly the woman worker, let alone protect what has already been gained.

A case in point is the closing of the Playskool toy factory on Chicago's west side. The workforce is 75% Black and Hispanic and over 60% women. When the company announced its plans to close the plant after having taken full advantage of a city-administered Industrial Revenue Bond, a low-interest loan procured in 1980. On December 4, 2½ months after the announced closing, the city of Chicago filed a lawsuit to block the closing set for Christmas time. "The conduct of the company left us no recourse," said Mayor Harold Washington at the time, adding, "Their action is an arrogant breach of trust. Speaking for [the Playskool workers] and for the taxpayers of Chicago who backed the company, this is a slap in the face."

Well either Washington has a bad memory or enjoys being slapped around, but over the next two months the city cut a deal with

Hasbro Bradley (owners of Playskool) whereby Bradley was allowed to close the factory, pay off the loan and get out of town, paying only token reparations to the workers. And Washington was singing a new tune: "We owe a great deal of credit to Mr. Hassenfeld [chairman of Hasbro Bradley] for his personal concern for the Playskool workers." The mayor added: "He helped write a record of corporate responsibility that sets high standards for business everywhere."

Playskool achieved its objectives. Harold Washington saved face. And the net effect for the workers is a busted union and a work force cut to 100 from 700 with a final shutdown in November of 1985. This is the sort of "corporate responsibility" that the Democrats and Republicans agree on.

For the labor movement as a whole, and for women in particular, the Playskool closing provides an important backdrop to a number of attacks on the working class. In order to further its attacks on a woman's right to an abortion, the government and corporations have set out to break women and working class militants where they are strongest — the trade unions. This is also an attempt to banish women to the household and a position of subservience. Working is not a privilege or a hobby — it is a right. For most single women and single mothers, it is a necessity.

Contrast the Playskool struggle to that waged by 2600 clerical and technical workers at Yale University, members of Local 34 of the Federation of University Employees. The Yale workers, mostly women, went on strike to secure their first contract. They won the support of the labor movement, the students and the community and after a 10-week battle they won a contract which included provisions for leaves of absence and set up committees to study job descriptions and day care as well as a 35% wage increase by 1987.

Similarly, food workers at the Libby's canning plant on Chicago's southside are now in their fifteenth week of a strike against a concessions contract imposed by the company which slashes health and medical benefits 50-70% and sets up a two-tier wage system. The workers, members of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 247P are 60% women and 40% Black.

It is only a matter of time before liberal legislation like the Equal Rights Amendment

becomes quite acceptable to even the most right-wing Republican. After all, it's no problem to extend equal rights to everyone when basic rights have been reduced to near nothing following in the wake of concessions, union busting, racist and sexist attacks.

But the struggle to build International Women's Day 1985 has opened a discussion over precisely what kind of leadership and what policy to lead, what is perhaps the most powerful sector of the workers movement — the woman worker. For its part, the Trotskyist Organization has fought to give the conference a working class character. We fought for a theme for the conference: Which way forward for women: Democratic or Labor Party? Following the November elections, the fight to build a Labor Party should be at the center of every working class organization's struggles.

Because it is not the victory of the Republicans or the defeat of the Democrats that determines our activities but the objective necessity for the working class to have its own party. This party must find its expression in the Women's Day celebration above all in the fight for jobs and a struggle for leadership in the unions.

The Change in Truth

Our readers will notice that we have changed the format of *Truth*. We have done this so that we can produce a larger paper with more information to arm our readers, more coverage of our activity and a deeper understanding of the mobilization of workers and oppressed in the US and around the world. Finally, an expanded *Truth* can better develop the tasks that the workers must accomplish in order to achieve victory.

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