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the october revolution revisited

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Let Them Eat Glasnost

Everyone knows the old joke about Russia's top-down brand of state capitalism: capitalism is the exploitation of man by man, whereas communism is the opposite. In fact, of course, there are no socialist republics (socialism not being compatible with government), nor are any of the Soviet Union's republics examples of socialism (which requires a classless, moneyless society functioning on a worldwide basis), nor are there even any soviets (councils acting as the workers' democratically elected delegates) in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. What's in the name, then? An immense majority who go to the market everyday to sell their only commodity--their ability to do work--to a small minority who...roll up their shirtsleeves and plunge into the "work" of supervising and directing the country's capital investments so as to make them yield a profit (some-one's got to do it, after all!).

And now that the USSR's workers, women and men alike, have glasnost, Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of "openness," they will presumably become happier and more productive and, not least, more accessible to multinational penetration. For even the spectre of communism has at last been incorporated into the marketplace!

Common Ownership

It is no academic exercise to point out that the word "communism" means only common ownership of the means of producing wealth: the right to decide on the use of the mechanisms by which society recreates and reproduces itself. The state is designed, on the contrary, to enforce the will of a minority against the wishes of the majority (in modern times, perversely enough, through the use of "majority rule"). As "open" as the CPSU and its politburo may now be projecting themselves, all the glasnost in the world (though there isn't that much of it floating around anyhow) will not make them communists.

Are We "Commies"?

As communists (socialists) ourselves, our policy has often been confused with theirs. During the second world war, when the Allied Powers calculated it was to their advantage to court Russia's ersatz ruling élite, a great deal of treacle and syrup poured forth from the US government about the heroic Soviet Union, led by that epic working-class genius, Joseph Stalin.

If you were too young during the days of world war II, or not yet born, there are books and articles readily available dealing with the cooperation and friendship between the bolshevik-style Communists on the one hand, and the professed champions of "democratic" capitalism on the other. (For starters, try The Pocket Book of the War, Quincy Howe, Ed., Pocket Books, Inc., New York, 1941.)

However, when the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain were wining, dining and dealing with Stalin in the Kremlin, the World Socialist Party and its Companion Parties in other countries were openly opposing the war as a carnage not worth the shedding of a single drop of working-class blood. When the secret police of the Soviet Union and the secret police of the United States (the forerunner of the present CIA) were acting in unison, we were speaking out and writing articles attacking the war.

When the Communist Party was recruiting for the war effort, selling Victory Bonds, waving the flag and singing the national anthem of America, as well as that of Russia, we of the World Socialist Party were speaking from the rostrum on Boston Common as our comrades in England spoke in Hyde Park; continuing to urge our fellow workers to organize for the abolition of capitalism everywhere--the basic cause of war.

Are They Communists?

Thus, we are not Communists in the popularly accepted meaning of that much-maligned word. We do not support or sympathize with Russian or Chinese or Cuban or any other state capitalism. We are communists, though, in the classical meaning of the term. We are scientific socialists who advocate the complete and immediate abolition of the buying and selling system in all its forms around the world and the immediate introduction of a system of production for use.

If the workers of the Soviet Union want an "opening" that is socially authentic, they would do well to press for the immediate elimination of the system that keeps them exploited in more or less the same way as it does everywhere else. Perhaps glasnost will inadvertently give them some space in which to think about organizing for a real socialist revolution. ☐

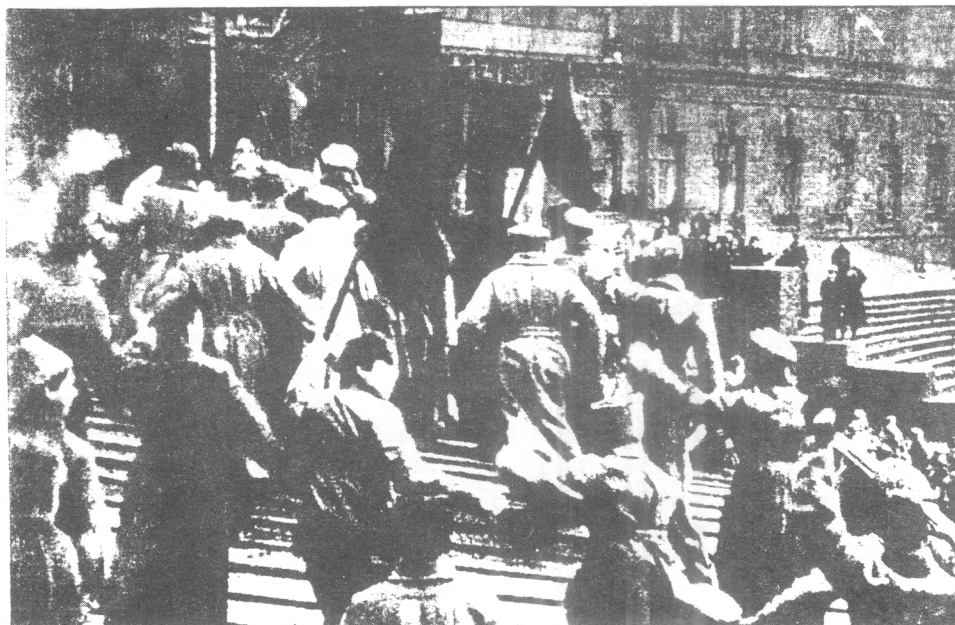
The World Socialist Review

a voice of world socialism

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To socialists it has long been apparent that the overthrow of the Kerensky régime in 1917 was not even remotely related to socialism. Accounting for the Bolshevik Revolution which overthrew it, however is greatly complicated on account of the Leninists' avowed Marxism. As a matter of fact, even the anti-Bolshevik wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP/Menshevik) and their comrades of the official socialist and labor parties around the world recognized them as Marxist even while disapproving of their methods—especially their scrapping of parliamentarism for a one-party dictatorship.

But the question of whether classical Marxism really lay at the foundations of the Bolsheviks' various programs (beginning from the time of their November revolution by our calendar) should have been given first priority at the outset. The Bolsheviks and their sympathizers in fact



70 Years Ago

Burying Tsarism

represented only a small part of the population in 1917, and it makes for very questionable Materialism to assert, as they did, that on the one hand the working class worldwide is a revolutionary class and then to attempt on the other to "lead" a revolution in which that same class admittedly forms no more than a minority within Russian society.

A Peasant-Based Economy

The fact is that the Russian working class in 1917 represented less than ten per cent of the population, the Russian system being mainly a peasant-based, agrarian economy burdened with holdovers from feudalism. The classical impetus to early capitalism in the West—brutal, outright dispossession of the peasantry from their means of livelihood by evicting them from their smallholdings—was still missing in the Russia of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (Russian serfs even had to wait until 1861 before being officially "emancipated.")

The whiplash of poverty and destitution that drives workers into the factories (after first expelling them from the land, making them an available pool of "free labor power") was not nearly as pervasive as it had been in Britain and Western Europe. Poor as the Russian peasants were, it was not an absolute case of having to work for wages or starve to death in a hurry. Landed estates continued to be a major element of the Russian economy right up until 1917, with peasant laborers beholden, generally, to absentee landlords.

Moreover, even when it comes to the articulation of class interests, the most popular of the radical political parties among the peasantry was not the Bolsheviks—a party rooted nominally in the Marxist tradition of a wage-worker/proletarian-based revolution—but the Socialist Revolutionaries: a non-Marxist, populist-style party with at least some orientation toward indivi-

dual terrorism; and there were others, some traditionally "right-wing" and centrist parties angling for the peasant vote as well.

Nor does the resistance offered the Bolsheviks everywhere in the cities outside Petrograd indicate they were overwhelmingly popular among the workers. But Petrograd fell with hardly a shot being fired, and Petrograd, as the capital of Russia, provided the sinews of war with which the new (Bolshevik) régime could operate.

Kerensky's Fall

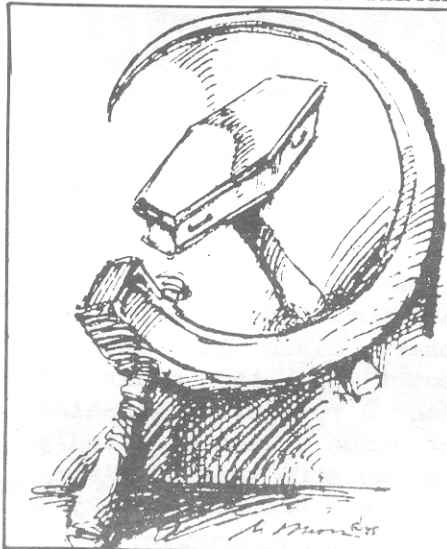
The toppling of the Kerensky-led Provisional Government in Petrograd the night of November 6-7 and its sequel are interesting in themselves for the light they shed on Bolshevik theory. The sequence of events went something like this:

The Bolshevik (majority) wing of the RSDLP had won the support of the majority within the Petrograd soviet, which (as was the case with other city soviets) had an arsenal of weapons at its disposal—a fact which in itself gives an idea of the extent of the powerlessness of the central government, or duma. Bearing in mind that the Russia of 1917 was extremely backward in its communications and transport facilities—a condition that made it all but impossible for a national government to get rapid assistance from other centers,—we can see how the capture of the Petrograd soviet's support proved to be the Leninists' coup de maître. For they were able to issue arms to their sympathizers and to re-occupy the offices of their newspapers, which had been seized by Government troops. They were also able to gain control of bridges and main

thoroughfares, railway stations, the State Bank and the central Post Office. Kerensky found himself deserted and had to escape from the capital to seek support elsewhere.

By 10 AM, the Revolutionary Military Committee had announced the overthrow of the Provisional Government. The population was assured of the immediate proposal of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production and the creation of a Soviet government.'

During that night of November 7th, the Bolshevik forces took over the Winter



Palace, which was the seat of the Provisional Government and arrested most of the remaining ministers in the Kerensky government. The Bolshevik consummation of Russia's capitalist revolution was accomplished with a death toll of some twenty persons and a handful of wounded.

That statistic, however, pertains only to the actual transfer of political power and would almost seem to indicate a lack of organized opposition to the Bolsheviks. But the situation was quite different during the days and weeks to follow. In Moscow and a number of other

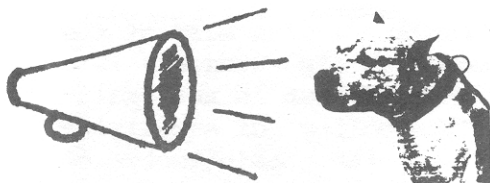
cities and towns where the Leninists proceeded to take power, they met with varying degrees of opposition from the respective populations. But the acid test of just how popular the Bolsheviks were among the Russian masses was made with the occasion of the Constituent Assembly elections, which circumstances had more or less forced them to guarantee.

Election Results

The Provisional Government had been unenthusiastic about calling these elections but had finally set the date, after a number of postponements, for November 25th; and the Bolsheviks permitted them to take place as scheduled. They were not pleased with the results. Of a total of approximately 41,700,000 votes cast, the Bolsheviks polled only 9,800,000 (23.5%); the Cadets (a right-wing party) 2 million (4.8%); and the Mensheviks or minority faction within the RSDLP, which by now were acting more or less as an independent party, got 1,360,000—3.3% of the vote. The Socialist Revolutionaries, on the other hand—including both Russian and Ukrainian—polled a large plurality (41%) of 17.1 million votes. By the numbers alone, it was their revolution.

When the Assembly met, there were (out of a total of 703 deputies), 380 regular Socialist Revolutionaries, 39 Left Socialist Revolutionaries, 168 Bolsheviks, 18 Mensheviks, 17 Cadets, four Popular Socialists and 77 minority representatives. This was clear evidence that the Bolshevik (November) Revolution was no majority revolution but only another example of a minority organization (and a faction at

(cont. p.14)



YOU SAID IT

Our Masters' Voice

WHAT MAKES BUSINESSMEN SO SMART?

"A US slowdown would deal a crushing blow to economic prospects for the heavily indebted developing world," thinks the author of a special report in Business Week [11/9/87], speaking of the recent stock market crash. And even worse,

A new round of Latin American recessions would hurt the struggling democratic régimes in Brazil and Argentina. And economic setbacks could trigger a fresh outflow of capital from the region.

Forgotten, of course, is the period when exactly the same thing was said about the struggling "moderately authoritarian" régimes in the same countries. Dictatorships are actually quite useful for maintaining workers in a state of abject submission to their exploited condition. What bothers the capitalist class is something much less human than that:

Now, unless stock prices turn back up, the evaporation of nearly \$1 trillion in shareholder wealth could contract spending by about \$45 billion over a couple of quarters or so[Business Week, 11/2/87]

And what is so bad about that? you might ask. Citicorp Chairman John S. Reed, in an interview in the same issue, gives us the big picture--

I was assuming three per cent economic growth, and now I'm assuming 0.5 per cent. You can't take that much out of the economy [sic] without an impact.

If you're wondering by this time where you as an "average person" fit into all of this high-level shop talk, the answer is, you don't; the economy will keep on going with or without you. Gary S. Becker coolly informs us that

The Commerce Dept. estimates nonhuman wealth [sic] at about \$13 trillion. Thus a \$1 trillion fall in the value of stocks reduces this wealth by less than eight per cent--and total wealth by less than two per cent. [11/9/87]

Well, after all....who but the politicians ever told you it was your system?

THE BUSINESS OF RUSSIA IS BUSINESS

It shouldn't have taken anyone 70 years to spot the error in asserting Lenin was a communist; but Mikhail Gorbachev wants to make sure that everybody understands the Soviet Union is a mainstay of the international capitalist system. What, he asks us,

is the world going to be like when it reaches our revolution's centenary? What is socialism going to be like? What degree of maturity will have been attained by the world community of states and peoples? [Boston Globe, 11/9/87]

The chief spokesman for a whole class of investors of capital might well ponder this question of "maturity." Since a joint-venture law to attract capital from investors in other countries was decreed last January [Business Week, 11/9/87], the capitalist class of the Soviet Union has received 250 joint-venture proposals from interested parties. But

the Soviets are moving carefully because they want to ensure that the first ventures make money.

The trick is how to find a modus vivendi which will allow foreign investors to retire their profits without creating a hard-currency problem for the Soviet economy. Although "the Soviets have proved more flexible" than Western companies represent them as being, and while the joint-venture law represents a "skillful device for neutralizing the hard-currency problem" (in one instance), the Vanguard of the Proletariat still needs some coaching:

Sometimes US companies have had to stop and give lectures on profit and loss and balance sheets. The Soviets have been soaking this stuff up like sponges. [Quoting Sarah Carey; Business Week, 11/9/87]

But the road to the "new world, the world of communism" (as Gorbachev terms it) also seems unfortunately to be littered with Just Wars:

In exchange for helping Ethiopia crush rebellions in Eritrea and successfully counter Somalia's attempts to "liberate" Ethiopia's Ogaden province in the late 1970s,

the Soviets reportedly demanded and received part of Ethiopia's coffee production, the impoverished country's principal foreign exchange earner. [Forbes, 11/2/87]

To be sure, wheeling and dealing in the world's markets does also have its shameful parts:

The heavy drinking in the Soviet Union simply means that the satisfactions and opportunities available to the Soviet working classes today are comparable to those available to the heavy-drinking English working classes at the time of the Poor Laws. [National Review, 11/6/87]

Working classes? What working classes? It is "not easy," Gorbachev assures us [Boston Globe, 11/9/87], to ensure "a possibility for continuous progress." So while "the Soviets" wine and dine international competitors and sign arms deals on the backs of starving children, the "road to communism" as trodden in Russia just gets longer and longer.

....the upper and middle classes with higher cash incomes and access to specialized supplies enjoy both subsidized food from the state and expensive food from the city markets; the lower classes do not have access to special supplies and can not afford market prices. And so it goes for public health care, public education, etc. [National Review, 11/6/87]

Without a doubt, as Gorbachev says, they "shall never turn off that road."

WRONG BOARD, RIGHT CHAIRMAN!

If there can be socialism in (only) one country, why can't there be socialism in (only) twenty or thirty? All the working class has to do is get used to waiting. Another waiting-room was added not long ago by the successor Gang to the Gang of Four in China—

Zhao Ziyang, the Chinese Communist Party leader and prime minister, has told delegates to the 13th Party Congress in Beijing that the stock and bond markets recently revived in China are not incompatible with Marxist principles. [Boston Globe, 11/9/87]

There are, it appears, a lot of other things which are also "not incompatible" with them: did Chairman Mao tell us everyone would get the same pay regardless

of their position? Just a slip of the tongue, says economist Liu Guoguang in a recent article, "Socialism is not Egalitarianism"; for "the policy of equalizing incomes contradicts the basic tenets of Marxism." [The Christian Science Monitor, 11/18/87]

He is quoted as stating that

The slogan of equality attracted thousands upon thousands of people to the struggle for socialism as equal distribution of income and confused socialism with egalitarianism.

The same Liu also advocates allowing "some people to become wealthy first as part of the goal of common prosperity" and believes that

China should tolerate aspects of capitalism [sic] 'so long as they benefit the growth of the socialist forces of production and do not impinge on the primacy of public ownership.'

Wherever the Leninist parties have come to power, the result has always been the same. They maintain capitalist institutions on the justification that ultimately this will result in the "emancipation of the working class." The goal of the Chinese Communist Party is not (and never will be) to accomplish this "ultimate" goal as its next step.

Using the language of Marxism as a justification for this (however much they blunder through the exercise) has become second nature to these old pro's. All the CCP seeks to do is make China "a modern socialist power, prosperous, democratic and highly cultured," in Zhao Ziyang's words. [Le Monde, 10/27/87]

But it is absolute twaddle to speak of "reforming" a revolution, given that the term "revolution" itself implies only the laying of a basis for subsequent changes which had long been necessary anyhow: which is precisely the sort of revolution embodied in the term "common ownership" (a.k.a. communism). The "nine-years' reform" of Deng Xiaoping is no more than a reordering of the China's state-capitalist agenda. The advantage of the reform (that it "can attract more people as it gives them more chances to engage in the State's management" [China Daily, 10/30/87]) is an advantage only to the accumulating minority which lives off the backs of the wage-earning majority.

—Ron Elbert



IS RUSSIA A NEW CLASS SYSTEM?

For years the Socialist Labor Party of America (SLP) had a rather unclear, ambiguous attitude towards Russia. In the 20s and 30s they gave the impression that they thought it was some sort of "proletarian" régime, but from the time of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact onwards it was denounced as "Soviet Despotism" and "Industrial Feudalism." Only in the 1970s was the need felt to embrace an overall theory as to the nature of Russian society.

Given that the SLP had always correctly rejected the view that Russia was socialist, they were faced with three choices: to say that Russia was some sort of deformed "proletarian régime" (as they had tended to do in the 20s and 30s and as the Trotskyists still do); to say it was a form of capitalism (i.e., state capitalism); or to say it was a new type of exploitative class society.

An SLP pamphlet, The Nature of Soviet Society, based on a series of articles that had appeared in the Weekly People in 1977 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Russian revolution, discusses these three theories in a fairly objective way before coming down in favor of the third, that Russia is "a new form of class-divided society... fundamentally different from capitalism."

Since we in the World Socialist movement have always held that what exists in Soviet Russia is a form of capitalism, we welcome the opportunity to reply to objections raised in the SLP pamphlet to our view.

Preliminary Comments

Before doing so, some observations are in order. It is true, first of all, that some state capitalist theories are quite inadequate for explaining their subject: for example, the Maoist view that Russia suddenly became state capitalist when Stalin died in 1953. Nor, secondly, is it sufficient to point to the existence of exploitation, class privilege and the state in Soviet Russia and the West to draw the conclusion that the USSR has the same system as in the West, even if this is based on the fact of government rather than private ownership. For these could also be the features of some hypothetical new class society, which is precisely the point at issue: is Russia a new exploiting society, or is it a form of capitalism? If we are to demonstrate that Russia is (state) capitalist we must show, in the pamphlet's words, that its "economic laws of motion" are the same as those operating under capitalism.

The Nature of Soviet Society mentions three aspects of the Soviet economic system which it sees as being incompatible with capitalism:

(1) "The regulating motive in a Soviet enterprise is not production for sale with a view to maximum profit for the enterprise, or maximum return on investment, but production according to the specifications of a bureaucratic plan."

(2) "...all basic decisions...are made in a centralized fashion by a mammoth state apparatus. These decisions do not reflect the logic of a capitalist market—that is, they do not primarily reflect the workings of the law of value—but the interests and whims of bureaucratic allocation."

(3) "...the absence of classic periodic crises is powerful evidence that the USSR is not a capitalist system or a variation of the mode of production described by Marx."

Individual enterprises in Russia, it is true, are not autonomous, profit-maximizing units in the Western sense. Even though they are engaged in production for sale (i.e., in commodity production), they do not necessarily seek "the maximum profit for the enterprise" but rather to produce





"according to the specifications of a bureaucratic plan." But, as we shall now see, this plan seeks to maximize profits for the Russian economy as a whole.

We deny the validity of the second objection, in other words, and assert that, on the contrary, in Russia "all basic economic decisions...do...primarily reflect the workings of the law of value." Talking about "the interests and whims of bureaucratic allocation" gives the impression that somehow the ruling class in Russia ("the bureaucracy") has a completely free hand when it comes to making economic decisions and is not subject to pressures acting on it with the force of what Marx called "external, coercive laws." It suggests that in Russia there exists a system of production for use, but one only accessible to the ruling class, such as existed (for instance) under feudalism and other pre-capitalist societies.

If this were the case, then goods and services would take the form of simple use-values. But a basic feature of the Soviet economy is that nearly all goods—producer goods as well as consumer goods—are produced for sale, as commodities, and therefore have an exchange-value in addition to their use-value. It is just not true, as the SLP pamphlet claims, that "market relations" have been

"suppressed" in Russia by "a bureaucratic plan." This rests on a misunderstanding of the nature of "planning" there: what the Plan tries to do is precisely to coordinate market relations between enterprises, to organize and orient commodity production. In other words, it does not abolish the market and production for sale at all but merely attempts (and none too successfully, by all accounts) to control and direct the process.

It is not simply commodity production that exists in Russia. Since labor-power too is a commodity there, wage-labor exists, and, as Marx put it in a well-known passage from Wage Labor and Capital,

capital presupposes wage labor; wage labor presupposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally evoke each other.

In other words, wage labor, under conditions of generalized commodity production, produces a surplus value which is re-invested as capital in the exploitation of wage labor. This too exists in Russia, and it is such surplus value that the ruling class there is obliged to seek to maximize as the price of staying in the competitive rat race (economic and military) with the other states in the capitalist world system.

So the Russian ruling class does not have a free hand in economic matters but is obliged to seek to maximize the amount of surplus value extracted from the wage-working class under its control. Interestingly enough, a 1985 SLP leaflet, "Socialism versus Soviet Despotism," does make the same argument:

The Soviet economy, like the capitalist system, is based on wage labor, which is to say, on the exploitation of wage labor...Every Soviet factory, every Soviet mine, every Soviet mill is expected to show a profit. This profit must come from the wealth Soviet workers create over and above their wages—just as the profits of General Motors and Westinghouse and IBM come from the surplus value produced by their respective wage slaves. And, just as GM, Westinghouse and IBM strive constantly to increase that share of the workers' production that is appropriated as profits, so, in the Soviet Union, the bureaucratic exploiters of the workers put the pressure on factory managers to turn the screws on the workers.

Bureaucratic Greed?

If this is the case (and it is), then we should ask ourselves whether this occurs just to satisfy the "whim" or the greed of the "bureaucratic exploiters"—or whether it is an expression of the economic laws of motion of the Soviet economy, of which the bureaucrats are but the agents, the same as the capitalist owners in the West with their stocks and bonds.

To maximize the surplus value extracted from the working class—which, we emphasize, is not a whim, but an economic necessity for the Soviet ruling class—

these latter must first have some measure of value and surplus value, which can only be money ("the universal crystallization of exchange value," as the pamphlet rightly calls it). Surplus value in monetary form is profit, so it is the monetary calculation of the rates of profit in the various sectors of industry which provides the Russian ruling class with the information it must have to make its key economic decisions: those concerning capital investment.

Profit-Seeking Enterprises

In the private form of capitalism that exists in the West, the spontaneous movement of capital to the more profitable sectors decides where new investment will go; the decision is made through the spontaneous operation of the law of value. But since, as we saw, individual enterprises in Russia are not autonomous profit-seeking units like the private (and state) capitalist firms of the West, this task of allocating new capital to the more profitable sectors falls, in the Soviet economy, to the state.

The state planners are obliged, in short, to try to reproduce bureaucratically the same result that the spontaneous operation of market forces brings about in the West. Which is another way of saying that they are obliged to try to apply the law of value consciously. This does not rule out, any more than it does in the West, subsidizing certain politically or strategically important industries, nor seeking a longer-term rather than an immediate short-term profit.

Thus, the Russian economy is just as much governed by

the law of value and the pursuit of maximum profit (even if this is at national rather than at enterprise level) as are the Western economies. It too can therefore be properly described as capitalist, but—taking account of the form of ownership and the much more active role of the state—we can qualify this further by calling it state capitalist. It must not however be forgotten that, in the end, there is only a single world capitalist economy of which both the private capitalism of the West and the state capitalism of the East are merely parts. Russian state

capitalism is not a separate economic system existing on its own.

Capitalism, then, is alive and well in the Soviet Union. It only remains to add that the case against seeing Russia as a new exploiting class system is based not on the theoretical impossibility of such a system coming into being (even though this is unlikely, given the integrated nature of the world economy today), but on the empirical evidence of how the Soviet economy operates in practice, in terms of its own laws of motion.

—Adam Buick

Tribute to Rab (1893-1986)

Last New Year's Eve I. Rab, a founding member of the World Socialist Party, died. The following is a tribute offered in his memory.

While still attending high school in Boston, Rab was the youngest secretary of the Socialist Party of America (Eugene Debs, Norman Thomas) and considered himself quite well grounded in Marxism. In 1916, as a young man enrolled at Ohio Northern, he went to Detroit in search of a summer job, fully intending to resume his studies in the Fall. He found employment at the River Rouge Ford plant and also contacted the SP of A. There he met his wife for 63 years, Ella Riebe, whose father had been an organizer for the SP of A in the Montana-Wyoming-Colorado region.

He heard about two Englishmen who were conducting socialist classes. The "Brits" were Moses Barritz and Adolph Cohn of the

Socialist Party of Great Britain who chose to sit out the war in the USA. After his first encounter with Barritz's eye-opening mockery of his reformist position and Cohn's scholarly analysis on the same theme, Rab was never the same again. He knew what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. So much for the SP of A! So much for college! He would stay in Detroit.

Rab was a quick learner and, encouraged by Cohn and Barritz, despite world war I, organized on-the-job classes using SPGB pamphlets as text in the factory yard during lunch hour. He was warned by his supervisor many times, but he ignored the consequences. His defiance finally resulted not only in his dismissal but in his being blacklisted. By this time he and Ella had two little children, and there was nothing to do but move back home to Boston.

Somewhere around this time, a few scattered comrades in New York and Detroit along with Rab in Boston organized the Socialist Education Society, which eventually evolved into the



Workers' Socialist Party and finally the World Socialist Party. Alone in Boston, Rab spoke on street corners and attracted enough people to start classes, first in his home and then in rented rooms, empty storefronts and finally meeting halls. He was a colorful speaker and a superb teacher, so much so that by the mid-twenties a viable group had been organized.

In 1928 he became the director of a sizeable boy's athletic club called "The Vagabonds." He knew little about baseball but his talks on science, philosophy and current events (from which he always extracted a socialist message) soon had the boys reading Party literature and listening to selected university professors whom Rab had been able to persuade to address the Club in their specializations. At least half the group eventually joined the WSP.

The depression of the thirties provided fertile soil for socialist propaganda, and the Party grew in numbers and spirit. There was much enthusiasm and a youthful mingling of social and socialist activity. A new and busy Party headquarters became a center of many interests. Rab's house became a home away from home to comrades and prospects

alike. The open-house atmosphere was graciously presided over by Ella, whose children had by then grown up sufficiently for her to become active in the Party. She was secretary of Boston Local during the most dynamic years.

Then came world war II. The Party, even under wartime conditions, managed to carry on successfully. Regular forums, debates, economic classes and discussions, as well as the publication of the Western Socialist were steadily maintained. Of course, during this period, Rab was not alone; there were many members eager to write, speak and even clean up headquarters after a meeting or a social event. It was possible to embark on an extended organizing tour of the Detroit-Chicago area which was instrumental in re-establishing the Detroit Local. Those were probably the happiest and most rewarding years of Rab's life.

After the war, the social climate became less favorable to spreading socialist ideas. Returning servicemen were forced to reorganize their lives under new circumstances and perspectives, altered hopes and fears. With the cold war anti-red sentiment and the witch-hunting of the McCarthy era, the Party suffered along with every other group that deviated from the 100 per cent flag-waving jingoism of the period. The WSP continued to hold its own for many years, but it had clearly lost its momentum of earlier days.

It is pleasant to recall that Rab found optimism and encouragement even when

things appeared adverse. One such special occasion was his visit (with George Gloss of Boston) to Great Britain during the early fifties: he brought back unending anecdotes and accounts of the trip. He met people he had known only through correspondence or the Standard, or by reputation. He attended meetings in London, Manchester and Glasgow, speaking at branch and propaganda meetings; he was thrilled by the size, quality and support of the general membership. The entire experience was one of the highlights of his life.

He had begun his quest for a sane society before the days of radio; yet he realized that modern times called for modern measures in the use of the mass media. To his credit, he even appeared on the Party's TV broadcasts in the sixties. Rab was disdainful of the concept of "leaders" and "great men," implying as this does that an understanding of the forces which drive capitalist society was not required. He liked to use the initials ACDSPIE (A Clear, Definite, Socialist Position Is Essential) as a gimmick in lectures and a closing in correspondence.

It is sad to lose him. He symbolizes an era in which one man's voice did not seem so insignificant as today. Although Rab would protest, there is no doubt that the scope of his intellect, the example of his humanity, his expertise as a teacher and his charismatic magnetism combined in a unique personality that inspired people to think... and thinking people to act. Would that there were more "ordinary" men of his ilk. ☺

NEWS FROM THE NEW WORLD

Imagine no possessions....

MAKE FOOD, NOT MONEY

A system of society where everybody has free access to whatever they want obviously can only work if there is plenty of everything to go around in the first place.

When socialists point out that this is possible right now, a lot of people express serious doubts about its feasibility. This is understandable, given that we live in a form of society—capitalism—where most of us don't have what we want, and where it seems that the things we want are so expensive they must be in short supply; people quite naturally assume that the good things of life really are scarce. Socialism in a world of scarcity would certainly be an impossible dream, and anyone who thought otherwise might well expect to have her sanity questioned.

In fact, however, the only reason so many of the things we want and need for our happiness are scarce is that they are produced for sale at a profit rather than to satisfy wants and needs. It's the price tag on things

that keeps them inaccessible. It's not that we can't produce enough of everything to go around. It's that we don't, because then nobody would be making enough of a profit to make production worthwhile.

A good example is food. It's a fairly well-known fact that many people in this country are hungry. But it is important to realize that people don't go hungry because the food supply is inadequate: there is plenty of food. People go hungry because they can't get the money to buy it with (in spite of food stamps).

Let's not just talk about hunger in the United States. There are many people who still believe that, on a world scale, the planet can not produce enough food-stuffs to feed all the people in the world. But this belief (which dates back to Malthus) is quite groundless.

A direct-mail brochure circulated recently by Werner Erhard to promote The Hunger Project* cites some impressive statistics:

In the past ten years, we have come to recognize that a virtual miracle has taken place on our planet. Despite the fact that the world's population has nearly doubled in the past 30



**THINK IT OVER!!
... & SUBSCRIBE**

4 issues...\$1.00

years, the world's food supply now more than equals the need for food.

Today, for the first time, enough food is produced on this planet to adequately feed every man, woman and child. In fact, the worldwide level of food production is already sufficient to feed the entire projected population in the year 2000—one billion more people. Even with the expected rise in population beyond the year 2000, projected growth in food production predicts the world will continue to have the ability to feed itself

JOIN THE SOCIALIST CORRESPONDENCE CLUB!

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OR WRITE TO:**

Louise Cox
c/o Head Office
SPGB
52 Clapham High Street
London SW4 7UN
ENGLAND

Name _____
Address _____

Interest(s) _____



on a sustainable basis.

In addition to the world's food supply having been raised to the level where it more than equals the world's food needs, the statistical evidence and other solid examples of success clearly demonstrate that ending hunger is no longer merely a dream. Hunger and starvation can, in fact, be ended by the turn of the century.

Socialists agree: for a long time now we have been saying there is a potential abundance of food (and of everything else we need) on the planet.

But the only way to end world hunger for good and all is to make food freely available to people by instituting the common right of access to it—along with access to all the rest of the world's wealth. As long as goods and services have price tags, some people will not be able to get what they need. (Which is the whole point of price tags—to limit access.)

By recognizing that WE NO LONGER NEED MONEY to regulate the the provision of goods, including food, we will make possible a society based on abundance, where everybody can take enough from the common store to satisfy their wants and needs.

As long as money exists, I doubt very much that Werner Erhard will realize his

goal of ending world hunger. But socialism is certainly possible by the turn of the century. All we have to do is make it happen!

—Karla Ellenbogen

(*) From a brochure announcing "the largest global satellite teleconference in history," to take place on November 14th in 19 countries.

THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The World Socialist Party of the United States holds:

1. —That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
 2. —That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
 3. —That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
 4. —That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
 5. —That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
 6. —That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
 7. —That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
 8. —THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, therefore, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.
- Those agreeing with the above principles and desiring enrollment in the Party should apply for Application for Membership from the sec'y of nearest local or the Nat'l Hdqtrs.*

Profit and Pragmatism

Now that we are well into the pre-election period, all of the aspiring candidates for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination are busy trying out their recruitment-poster tactics on us, in the usual effort to persuade us that they can make the system work (provided we have lowered enough expectations, of course).

What are our "choices"?

DUKAKIS offers farmers the option of diversifying their crops instead of flooding the markets with a relatively reduced range of products and pushes in tandem a "socialized" health-care scheme (for Massachusetts). GORE proclaims the need for maintaining a strong "defense posture" (otherwise known as "sending signals to the defense industry"), to defend the US's farflung interests against the spectre of communism (i.e., against workers and peasants fighting for their lives with their backs to the wall). JACKSON emphasizes the importance of economic and social justice as he prepares to continue jet-setting around the world embracing leftist politicians and causes.

BABBIT lives up to his literary namesake, proposing the adoption of government policies which will help to keep business successful and productive; which apparently is an urgent precondition for getting the rest of us that way. SIMON rambles on about education and social issues, as though only some of the issues are social, or, for that matter, issues. GEPHARDT, along with Gore, advocates continued high military spending but with an emphasis on conventional rather than nuclear weaponry. (This will ensure longer and bloodier wars, which are obviously better than short, apocalyptic, radioactive ones!)

Differences Without Distinction

Sounding more like automakers competing for customers than candidates grubbing for votes, they advertise their infinitesimally different approaches to dealing with the issues of the day (housing, taxation, jobs, drugs, etc.). Slick-sounding buzzwords like "partnership" (and more ponderous ones like "infrastructure") trundle through their speeches like inscrut-

able robots.

On the face of it, "pragmatism" seems to be their only shred of a program. As an "approach," it has historically enjoyed a better reception among voters in the US for enunciating a program than its rival philosophy known as "ideology" although both are in their essence closely intertwined attitudes. For each represents, in its own way, a virtue eminently suited to the marketplace.

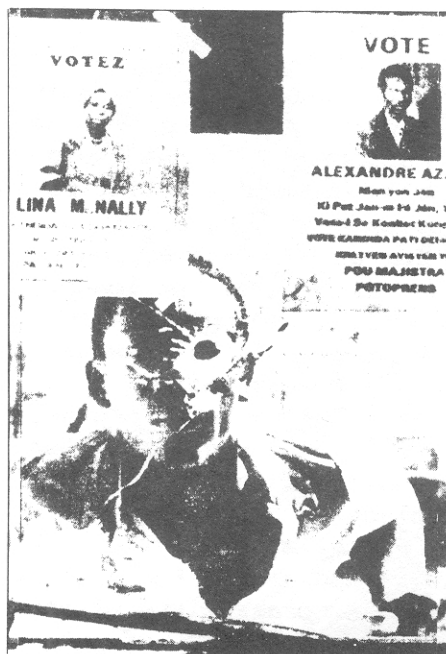
Capitalist production, in its spread around the globe, has made pragmatists of the most diverse kinds of politicians throughout the world's nation-states. But this is very far from saying that a pragmatic approach epitomizes good judgement or "common sense" in a politician. Any pragmatic political course is one way or another founded on some ideological thesis, if only because all forms of action require a theoretical orientation. Yet not one of the present Democratic Party candidates has ever evidenced any awareness of the connection.

Perhaps this is only because the mass media have increasingly trivialized the discussion of issues and

THE WORLD SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

The following parties adhere to the same Object and Declaration of Principles (see page 12):

WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA	PO Box 1440M, Melbourne, Victoria 3001 PO Box 8279, Stirling Street, Perth, W. Australia PO Box 2291, Sydney, NSW PO Box 1357, Brisbane, Queensland
AUSTRIA: BUND DEMOKRATISCHER SOZIALISTEN	Gussriegelstrasse 50, A-1100 Vienna
SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA	PO Box 4280 Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8 CP 244, Pointe-aux-Trembles, Québec H1B 5K3
WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (IRELAND)	41 Donegall Street, Belfast
SOCIALIST PARTY OF NEW ZEALAND	PO Box 1929, Auckland, NI
WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES	PO Box 405, Boston, MA 02272
SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN	52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN



ideas. But there is another side to the question with which even Democratic politicians should be familiar. Economists call it "effective demand," and, while all of the candidates know about it, not one of them suspects there might be something wrong with it. It is that old basic rule of capitalist production, that commodities cannot move from producer to consumer unless a profit is realized in the process; for the wellbeing of the economy

is otherwise in jeopardy.

This is pragmatism of sorts—if we can accept the basic assumption on which present-day society is founded, that profit must be realized to maintain a healthy economy; and provided we can accept a notion of "economic health" according to which people are allowed to drink milk only if they can afford to pay for it—or it will even be produced only if agribusiness can cover its costs.

It doesn't take any close examination of the various procedures being bandied about by this latest team of make-believe surgeons to reveal they are without exception based on the above ideological premise: that human society cannot exist without the selling-and-buying connection. Or that "working for a living"—producing more wealth than that corresponding to one's wages or salaries and benefits, for the enjoyment of a nonworking élite (the accumulators of capital) represents just a fact of nature.

All the "can-do" hype now being pushed on the voters

by the Democratic candidates is really based on the same dreary old capitalist myth. Unfortunately for their solutions, all based on "working within the system"—i.e. retaining production for profit—they are not, from a human vantage point, very pragmatic.

—Mike Phillips

ON * * * * * SECOND * * THOUGHT *



From the Western Socialist:

Exploitation does not mean simply that the workers do not receive the full produce of their labor; a considerable part must always be spent on the production apparatus and for unproductive though necessary departments of society. Exploitation consists in that others, forming another class, dispose of the produce and its distribution; that they decide what part shall be assigned to the workers as wages, what part they retain for themselves and for other purposes. Under public ownership this belongs to the regulation of the process of production, which is the function of the bureaucracy. Thus in Russia bureaucracy as the ruling class is master of production and produce, and the Russian workers are an exploited class. In Western countries we know only of public ownership (in some branches) of the capitalist State.

—"Public Ownership and
Common Ownership"
(Anton Pannekoek,
November 1947)

BURYING TSARISM/cont.

that) being in the right place at the right time to seize power.² Lenin called upon his loyal sailors from the Fortress of Kronstadt in Petrograd Harbor to disperse the first session declaring that "the workers have voted with their feet!"³ And so the misnamed Dictatorship of the Proletariat was born.

Why misnamed? The precedent cited by Lenin and retained forever after in Bolshevik mythology was the Paris Commune of 1871, which Frederick Engels had declared to be "the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."⁴ But it must be pointed out that the Commune was a

multi-party government with Marxists in fact a small minority, compared with Proudhonian anarchists and followers of Auguste Blanqui—the latter certainly no Marxist but an advocate of the very type of minority revolution that the Bolsheviks did pull off almost a half-century later. Unlike the Bolsheviks, however, Blanqui accepted the situation and participated in the short-lived revolutionary government along with his Proudhonian and other opponents.

So the Revolution itself was certainly not an example of a Marxist revolution (one
(cont. p. 15)

BURYING TSARISM/cont.

made by a socialist—class-conscious—working class) on the understanding of Marx and Engels. As far back as 1848, when both were young men, they had seen the proletarian-socialist revolution as having to be the work of the vast majority in the interests of the vast majority.⁵ Such a concept is in harmony with their Materialist Conception of History. Each social order, according to this theory, creates its own "gravediggers," the class that must organize to overthrow it. Socialism would in that case have to be instituted by a working-class majority, conscious of its place in history. There was no such animal, for Engels and Marx, as a "revolutionary vanguard."

Russia's Capitalist Revolution

Despite the edited Marxism of the Bolsheviks and all the protestations to the contrary by capitalism's mass media and educational establishments, the Bolshevik Revolution could not have been more than the completion of Russia's capitalist revolution begun the previous March. The bourgeoisie of Russia were entirely too insignificant in numbers to bring to fruition the transformation of a peasant-based economy into one bearing the hallmarks of wage labor and capital as its dominant relationships.

What was therefore needed in Russia to accomplish such a goal was an economy controlled and in fact owned by the state: state capitalism. And that was what was instituted, with varying degrees of intensity, from the earliest period of "War Communism," when the Bolsheviks had to fight off invading armies and White Russian forces on some 21

different fronts; through Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), when outside capital and capitalists were encouraged to invest and build in "Communist" Russia; and on to Stalin's collectivization of agriculture and the Five Year Plans for industry.

What ensued, over the decades, was a series of periods marked by mass liquidation and exiling of "Kulak" (capitalist-minded) peasants, purges of political oppositionists, slave-labor "gulags," and so on. But always in the background—and this is the essential hallmark of capitalism—the Bolsheviks set about assiduously developing and extending the exploitation of a growing working class via the perfecting of the relations of wage labor and capital.

Thus assured of an expanding pool of captive labor power, the emerging state bureaucracy that encrusted itself around the perquisites of office began to assume, in increasing measure, the more traditional role of a national bourgeoisie, even if it did refuse itself the designation of such.

—Harmo

1. See the Selected Works of V.I. Lenin, Vol. VI, "The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies" (New York: International Publishers), p 399, for the text of this declaration.

2. The reader will also note that the percentage of seats in the Constituent Assembly shifts in favor of the Socialist Revolutionaries (to 54.1 per cent of the deputies, as against their plurality of only 41 per cent of the popular vote)

3. Referring, apparently, to the mass desertion of Russian troops from the Eastern Front during the

first world war, the seizure of land by peasants and the obvious massive rejection of the Provisional government.

4. See the Preface to The Civil War in France by Karl Marx.

5. See the Communist Manifesto, Section II, "Proletarians and Communists," where they speak of the proletariat using its political supremacy to "wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie" and of "the revolution by the working class." Later, Marx revised himself in favor of "abolishing the wages system" altogether—an act which would make it obviously unnecessary to propose "wresting capital from the bourgeoisie," i.e., transferring it to the state and then abolishing private property.

SOCIALIST PAMPHLETS

Questions of the Day	1.00
From Capitalism to Socialism: How We Live and How We Could Live	.70
Socialism as a Practical Alternative	.60
A World of Abundance	.25
Women and Socialism	.70
Trade Unions	.70
The Strike Weapon	.60
Historical Materialism	.60
Socialist Party and War	.60
Is a Third World War Inevitable?	.60
Ireland—Past, Present and Future	.60
Head-Fixing Industry	.60

WSP-US

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I enclose \$_____ for the above items (check off as appropriate).

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A Revolution Still to be Made

Editor's Note: The following text is taken from a letter issued at the close of a speaking tour of the United States last Spring by two comrades from Europe: Steve Coleman of the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB), and Richard Montague of the World Socialist Party of Ireland. It was written jointly for distribution to the general public, and we reproduce a section of it here because of its relevance to the cause of world socialism.

It is with great pleasure that we can report the success of our recent North American speaking tour, organized by the World Socialist Party of the United States. Activities ranged from debates against defenders of capitalism (in one of which an economics professor ran out of the hall rather than answer our case) to public meetings (some informal, others in large halls with audiences of over 100—all well received) to radio interviews (such as the Fred Fiske Show in Washington, DC, one of the most prestigious programs of its kind on which we were kept on for two hours rather than the one originally planned and succeeded in tearing Fiske's apologies for capitalism to threads).

We are under no illusion that the tour was the beginning of a socialist revolution or that the many people who gave us a polite hearing all agreed with us. What the tour did show—and it demonstrated this emphatically—was that there is a wide body of people in North America who are receptive to genuine socialist ideas (as opposed to the Leninist defense of Russian state capitalism or left-wing reformism). Those of us who are part of that wide body have a duty to build upon what exists, expanding the world socialist movement into a known political force in this country.

Our Present Situation

The World Socialist Party of the United States is currently a very small political organization and we do not pretend for one moment that we have all the answers concerning the way to transform society from the insanity of capitalism to the socialist alternative embodied in our object and principles (see page 12). We do claim that the case for socialism is simple, logical and in urgent need of dissemination throughout the world.

What are the problems we face?

Firstly, the bosses own and control the institutions of education (indoctrination), the media and the big, well-funded political parties of capitalism.

Secondly, the concept of socialism has been systematically distorted over the past century, both by those who have a vested interest in opposing it and those who claim to be defending it.

Thirdly, many workers have been driven to cynicism by the history of capitalist politics and want nothing to do with any "isms" or political organization.

Fourthly, America is a vast country and the tyranny of distance makes it much harder for those of us who are not rich to organize than for our bosses who possess the technology of mass communication.

Barriers to a Socialist Movement

There is no point in ignoring these obstacles to the growth of a socialist movement in this country. Neither should the problems lead us to defeatism. History is the story of humankind overcoming its problems and, without exaggeration, if we are to survive at all it will only be by overcoming the mighty barriers before us and developing a World Socialist Party which can defeat capitalism.

It is instructive at this point to consider the position of our fellow socialists in Ireland, who are mainly based in Belfast: five years ago there were only two of them in the WSP there, fighting a lonely struggle against bigotry and violence. Today they are a party to be reckoned with—probably the most visible party in Belfast—with their own office, a printing press, a regular journal which is selling very well and a growing membership.

So what can be done?

We need a commitment from as many people as possible to join, or at least support, the WSP in its North American efforts. We do not want support from those who do not adhere to our principles, for only on the basis of common understanding can we be a movement of equality, without leaders or led.

Above all, we need activity of a conscious kind so that we can build this movement on the basis of the strength of principled socialist knowledge.

—Aaron Feldman (WSP-US)

Steve Coleman

Richard Montague