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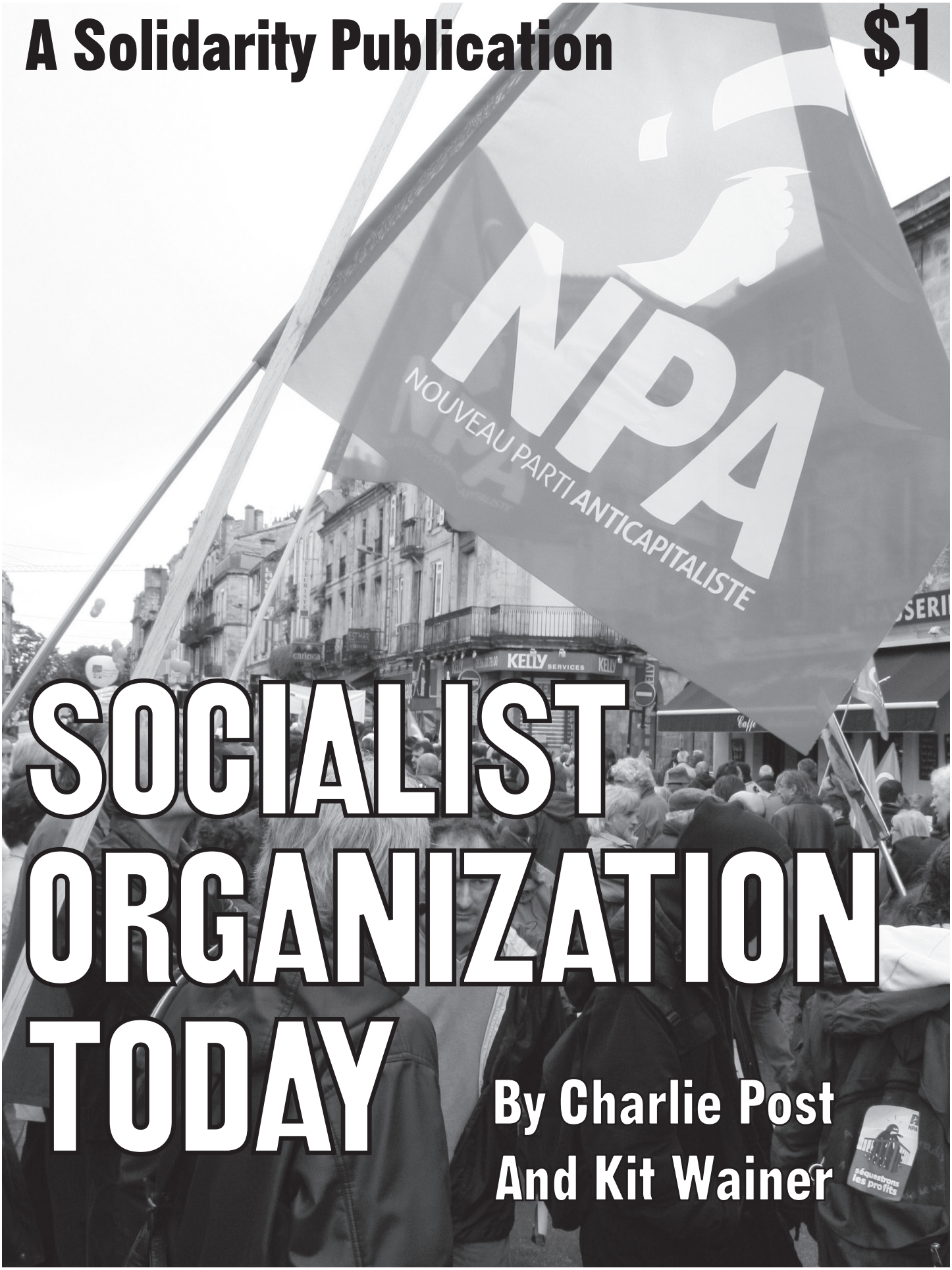

SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION TODAY

By Charlie Post
And Kit Wainer

LABOR DONATED

A Solidarity Publication

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SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION TODAY

By Charlie Post and Kit Wainer

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of this pamphlet was written in the mid- 1990s and published in 1997. At that time, the left that had emerged during the struggles of the 1960s and early 1970s— the liberation struggles of African-Americans, Latinos and Asians, the women's and gay/lesbian movement, the movement against the US war in Vietnam and the wave of wild-cat strikes that shook US industry—was in crisis. The nearly two decade downturn of social struggles, the employers' offensive against the organized and unorganized working class, and the bipartisan Democratic and Republican attacks on social welfare and pro-worker government regulation had undermined the confidence of much of the US left. The collapse of the bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and the Chinese bureaucracy's embrace of capitalist "market reforms" disoriented those on the left who believed the myth of that these societies were "socialist." European social democratic government's support for "social liberal" austerity and deregulation—their abandonment of any attempt to win reforms under capitalism—bewildered those on the US left who thought that the official leaders of the unions, women's and civil rights movements could transform the Democratic party into a party that could both win office and carry out meaningful reforms.

The far left in the US reacted, in the main, to these developments in two very different ways. On the one hand, a majority of leftists in the 1990s who remained politically active abandoned building explicitly socialist organizations in favor of organizing a "progressive" opposition to the "corporate right." Some of these comrades did important work organizing among workers, people of color, women and queer people. However, most adopted the politics of reformism—putting their faith in "progressive" labor bureaucrats, mainstream leaders of the civil rights, women's and LGBT movements, and the Democratic party.

On the other hand, a minority of socialists embraced what we called "vanguardism:"
For the most part, the few revolutionary organizations which remain merely repeat the claim that they are the (nucleus of the) vanguard of the working class, and denounce those who deny their leadership credentials. Rather than attempt to analyze the crisis of the left which has disheartened so many socialists – and stripped even the ranks of these "vanguards" – they have acknowledged their shrunken size only to praise their own endurance. — (page 1)

Nearly a decade after the publication of Socialist Organization Today much has changed, but much remains the same. The capitalist offensive—with the spread of "lean production" and "neo-liberal" government policies—continued unabated. While rank and file caucuses and networks in the unions and community based worker organizations continue to struggle, the labor movement and movements of women, LGBT people and people of color remain weak and under attack. The explosion of global justice activism after the 1999 anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle—the outgrowth of years of anti-sweatshop, "fair trade" and union reform organizing— went into decline after 9-11.

The most hopeful development of the past few years is the persistence of the movement against the US war and occupation of Iraq. While national demonstrations have declined in size after the massive mobilizations of the Winter-Spring of 2003, the emergence of resistance to the war among military families and active duty GIs, the growing opposition to the war in the ranks of organized labor and organizing against military recruitment (and the possible reintroduction of the draft) all point to the vitality of anti-war sentiment and organization. Equally encouraging are renewed signs of resistance among people of color—ranging from struggles for drivers' licenses for undocumented workers to the defense of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Unfortunately, the US small far left has not solved the problems we addressed in Socialist Organization Today nearly a decade ago. The US left has not escaped the traps of adaptation to the Democratic Party on the one hand; and of "vanguardism" on the other. Often left organizations embrace both simultaneously! The revolutionary left remains weak, largely unable to affect political life except during episodes of mass upsurge—like the mass anti-war mobilizations of the Winter- Spring 2004. As a result, we have been unable to overcome our isolation from communities of oppressed people and the working population in general.

Socialist Organization Today made the case for an alternative to the abandonment of socialist organization and politics and the "vanguardist" pretensions of much of the revolutionary left—building an organization with clear socialist politics that was committed to rebuilding the organizations of working class and popular resistance. Solidarity, over the nearly two decades we have existed, has attempted to build such an organization. We have had some limited success. Our members are well rooted in the labor movement, where we help build the rank and file current committed to solidarity, militancy and democracy. We have become involved in global justice, anti-war and Palestine solidarity activity. Through these activities, Solidarity has recruited and helped educate a small layer of young activists.

Much more needs to be accomplished. In particular, Solidarity still needs to find ways to embed ourselves in struggles of people of color against racism, and begin the long and diffi- cult process of building a truly multi-national and multi-racial organization.

If you find the analysis and arguments in this pamphlet provocative, contact us so that we may begin a political dialogue on how to best rebuild the movements of social resistance and build an effective, non-sectarian socialist left. If you are convinced, join Solidarity in our attempt to provide a modest but real model for the renewal of revolutionary socialism in the US.

The imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — and the threat of a U.S. attack on Iran — have become the central question for the American people and, of course, for the left. Building a powerful movement to 'Bring the Troops Home Now!', and stopping the growth of the police state at home, are essential for the future of the socialist movement, and of humanity.

- Charlie Post and Kit Wainer, August 2006

INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank Claudette Begin, Steve Bloom, Bill Breihan, Jack Cedar, Vivek Chibber, Steve Downs, Dianne Feeley, Kim Moody and Barbara Zeluck for their comments.

We dedicate this pamphlet to the memories of Steve Zeluck (1922-1985) and Ernest Mandel (1923-1995), whose work on revolutionary socialist organization laid the theoretical foundation for this pamphlet.

Socialists today are trying to chart their way through unfamiliar terrain. Socialist organizations seem to be weaker now than they have been at any point in the 20th century. At the same time, the unions and many of the movement organizations that we have expected to provide the basis for a working class and popular challenge to capitalism have declined as well.

The societies to which many on the left looked for examples are no longer of much use either. Most of the "Communist" countries have disappeared and the "Socialist" governments have become scarcely distinguishable from their conservative opponents. The regimes that some on the left looked to as models of "socialism" have collapsed, demonstrating the impossibility of building a viable post-capitalist economy and society ruled by a privileged, dictatorial bureaucracy. Similarly, the "Socialist" parties of western Europe have failed to establish an alternative to both "free market capitalism" and "authoritarian socialism." Instead, social democratic governments in France, Italy and Spain have been as brutal in deregulating their economies and dismantling their welfare states as the regimes of Thatcher or Reagan.

In spite of all this there are reasons for socialists in the U.S. to be hopeful. A small, but substantial number of people remain committed to socialist politics and organization. Within the U.S. left there has been a great interest in reexamining our pasts. Those who have remained active have been refreshingly willing to take a critical look at the history of the radical movement in order to overcome past mistakes. A larger number has remained committed to radical social change by building the working-class and social movements. Among these are activists in opposition/reform caucuses in the existing unions, in "workers' centers" among unorganized workers, and, while many of the social movements of the last three decades have declined precipitously, gay, lesbian and bi-sexual liberation activists have made their movement an important focus of struggle since the mid-1980s.

Moreover, outside the U.S., the past decade has been a decade of experimentation for socialists from the tradition to which Solidarity belongs. From France to South Korea, revolutionary activists embedded in mass, working-class struggles against neoliberalism and imperialism have attempted to give political expression to these movements as part of an overall process of renewing the revolutionary left on a non-sectarian and anti-capitalist basis. This has resulted in the creation of numerous broad left parties in recent years, the fortunes of which have been just as diverse. No matter what differences we in Solidarity may have over strategy and tactics with these comrades, we welcome these attempts to forge a genuine socialism for the 21st century: movements for socialism based on the grassroots, independent organizations and militant struggle of the working class and the oppressed. We also recognize that the prevailing conditions in the United States—the long downturn of social struggle and the corresponding decline and disorganization of the revolutionary left—indicate that the road ahead will be a more difficult one than those which our comrades elsewhere face.

We in Solidarity are committed to building these movements and participating in the ongoing discussions about the left's history (both positive and negative), and to maintaining a revolutionary socialist tradition in the US. The question is how to do that in today's political climate.

I: THE SOCIALIST LEFT TODAY

It is difficult to be socialist today. In a period in which activism has been on the wane for decades, the idea of a revolutionary left seems more and more abstract. Not surprisingly, many have given up building socialist organizations and political activity altogether. Many others, while remaining active have lost confidence in the practicality of socialist organization. Recognizing the weakness of the left, these activists believe we need to put off the project of socialist organization—and even refrain from use of the term "socialist"—until

some future time in which the balance of forces has changed. This current views the socialist project as irrelevant, or impractical, at least today.

Unfortunately, the revolutionary left has rarely offered serious answers to these critics. For the most part, the few revolutionary organizations that remain merely repeat the claim that they are the (nucleus of the) vanguard of the working class, and denounce those who deny their leadership credentials. Rather than attempt to analyze the crisis of the left which has disheartened so many socialists—and stripped even the ranks of these "vanguards"—they have acknowledged their shrunken size only to praise their own endurance.

For this trend the central task of revolutionaries is recruiting and training people around a fairly abstract understanding of the workings of capitalism and the necessity of socialist revolution. Refusing to prioritize the long-term reconstruction of activist movements, these organizations have fine-tuned programs which have little meaning for activists beyond their own memberships. In short, they have been guilty of precisely what their critics have associated with socialist politics in general.

The problem is that the "socialism is irrelevant" trend is partially right. The socialist project is far less viable today than at any other point in the twentieth century—not solely because of the collapse of the regimes that many on the left falsely identified with socialism. Movement leaderships—what we mean by the term "vanguard"—are small and embattled. For the most part they are not socialist, nor will they join a socialist organization until there is a level of mass struggle that would make the socialist project seem realistic to a large segment of this militant minority. Proclaiming one's unshakable fealty to revolutionary Marxism will not resolve this problem nor will it prevent anyone else from moving rightward.

We in Solidarity believe in a third course. We are committed to the revitalization of the organizations of social protest. At the same time we remain dedicated to the building of an effective socialist organization. That requires a willingness to understand how and why times have changed. Specifically, this pamphlet will offer an explanation of how genuine vanguard organization rose in previous decades and have faded more recently. From there we suggest a course we can take together to help rebuild the movements and a revolutionary left.

II: KEY QUESTIONS

How do people radicalize?

It's a catch-22, but movements are built by people who are radicalizing and activists radicalize when they absorb lessons from their experiences in movements. More powerful than ideas themselves, activity in struggle teaches the centrality of self-activity and self-organization. In order for workers, women, racial minorities or gays and lesbians to win struggles, they have to force capitalists and their state to make concessions. In building movements powerful enough to defend past popular gains and win new ones, working and oppressed people have to develop the broadest solidarity, they have to build democratic forms of organization, and they have to take the risks involved mass, militant action at the workplace or in the streets. People engaged in struggle develop ideas to explain and justify their actions— radical, anti-capitalist ideas. Very simply, the practical experience of strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins and the like is the key to the growth of working class and popular radicalism.

Different generations have learned this in different ways. Anti-war activists of the 1960s built massive protests and educational campaigns in opposition to the U.S. war in Vietnam. As the horror of the Vietnam war stunned a generation, activists mobilized a public outcry against it. They brought thousands of marchers into the streets in national demonstrations, organized local committees, canvassed neighborhoods, occupied universities, shut down induction centers, engaged in various forms of civil disobedience and built grass-roots support. Activity yielded both small and large successes such as an endorsement of a rally by a union or community organization, or a declaration by a new politician of opposition to the war. The mass mobilizations made the war increasingly difficult to prosecute and forced the White House to abandon it by 1973. Yet, few activists could have known what Henry Kissinger revealed years later: President Richard Nixon was contemplating the use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam but continuously postponed his decision out of fear of the anti-war movement. The eventual end of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam was a large victory for anti-war activism.

Anti war activists did not invent these tactics. Rather, they learned them from the civil rights movement, the most powerful social movement of the post-war era, which had blossomed only a decade earlier. African-American activists, with the support of white anti-racist allies, organized illegal marches, boycotts, sit ins and freedom rides that brought them into direct confrontation with the southern power structure. By the mid-1960s, the black freedom struggle had destroyed the "Jim Crow" system of legal racial segregation of public schools and facilities and re-won the right to vote for African-Americans.

These victories taught a generation of activists to rely on themselves and their own activities, rather than on the government and the courts. Faced with the wavering of Democratic Party liberals and the persistence of institutional racism in the north, the African-American freedom movement radicalized in the later 1960s. Tens of thousands of black activists embraced anti-capitalist politics and organized radical political formations—the Black Panther Party, the Poor People's Campaign, etc.—to demand the end of informal segregation of schools, housing and employment and a radical redistribution of wealth and income in the US. Fueled by the unorganized urban insurrections in 1965, 1967 and 1968, the Black Power movement forced the Johnson and Nixon administrations to create affirmative action programs in education and employment and massively expand social welfare programs in the US. The black movement was also the catalyst for the rank and file worker revolt that shook US industry in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Black-led workers' organizations—the Revolutionary Union Movements in auto, the reform movement in steel, and scores of others—were in the vanguard of the wave of wild-cat strikes and internal union rebellions.

The women's movement of the early 1970s also produced a layer of activists whose consciousness about gender relations and social change developed through struggle. Many "second wave" feminists were schooled in the anti-war and student mobilizations of the previous decade. They too mobilized themselves, created women's organizations and thereby raised the consciousness of millions of women.

In recent years, newly radicalized activists have learned some of what social movements can accomplish. Unfortunately, they have also seen some of the drawbacks of trying to force change in a period in which activism is at a low ebb. The movement against U.S. intervention in Central America in the 1980s radicalized tens of thousands on campuses and in communities throughout the country. Learning

from the experiences of anti-war activists from the Vietnam days, organizations such as the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) organized rallies, petition campaigns, educational programs, and material assistance to the victims of the war. Many of these activists learned the value of self-activity and developed an interest in Marxism, largely because of their contacts with revolutionary organizations in Central America. However, the anti-intervention movement was bucking the trend—a pattern of movement decline and the fact that few U.S. soldiers were placed at risk of injury or death. It never developed the mass strength of the previous anti-war movement, and was not as successful in affecting U.S. foreign policy.

In the 1980s and 1990s gay rights activists have spear headed the most substantial social movement of recent years. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) has organized marches and civil disobedience to demand government action to fight AIDS. These activists have seen government indifference and challenged it with sit ins and street blockades. Thousands of activists learned that their own activity has brought the AIDS epidemic to public attention. Unfortunately, however, they too were bucking a downward trend in all the movements and have had great difficulty winning reforms from government bodies whose budgets are being slashed. As a result, many gay and lesbian activists are quickly "burnt out" by their inability to win concrete gains, while many of those who remain consistently active tend to view their struggles in isolation from those of workers, racial minorities and women. All too many have placed their hopes in Democratic Party "progressives" like the Clintons and Obama, wasting precious time and energy that was needed to maintain networks of radical activists.

In the last year, new layers of activists have emerged in the struggle for immigrant rights. The huge mobilization of 2006, culminating in mass strikes of immigrant workers in Los Angeles and several other cities, were the product of years of immigrant organizing in unions, workers' centers and community organizations. While the immigrant rights movement was able to defeat the most reactionary immigration "reform" proposals, it has been unable to win a new amnesty for undocumented workers and an easy road to citizenship. The attraction of Democratic Party politics, long a mechanism for individual upward social mobility for a tiny minority of immigrant communities, has further undermined the

radical potential and social power of the immigrant rights movement.

All of these potentially powerful and radicalizing social movements of the past three decades went into decline and face profound difficulties maintaining networks of activists and rebuilding struggles. To some extent, the decline of mass movements is inevitable. Most working people can only be involved in large scale protests, strikes and sit-ins for short periods of time before the demands of making a living forces them back into private life. However, the political and organizational weaknesses of the minority of activists who maintain the struggle in good times and bad—in particular the belief of many activists that they can advance their struggles through the pro-corporate Democratic Party— the makes rebuilding these movements even more difficult.

Why isn't everybody radical?

Social movements have generated feminists, anti-racists, anti-interventionists, and gay rights activists. As we will soon see, labor activism has also produced several generations of worker militants. In all cases, a substantial minority has developed an interest in socialism and many have joined socialist organizations. Yet the majority of activists do not become socialists and the majority of people do not become active.

Political consciousness develops unevenly, both within the activist communities and over time. Waves of movement radicalism have schooled generations in self-activity while at their peak, but many of those same activists have withdrawn as their movements have ebbed and people return to the demands of private life.

The success movements achieved at their high points often leave a lasting imprint on consciousness. The "Vietnam Syndrome", for example, still had a place in popular parlance at the beginning of the Gulf War. But the reforms they won are in danger once the movements recede.

The activist milieu shrinks as the movement is in decline and only the most committed remain. Again the cruel irony is that when movements are small it is harder to recruit new members and harder to radicalize new activists. When movement organizations lack the power to win immediate gains, only those with a long-term vision of social change stick around for the fight. In these circumstances, many committed movement activists tend to narrow their political vision in the hope of some how preserving their organizations and whatever gains they made in the past.

How do radicals organize?

Even in periods of little movement activity, some activists remain radical and some radicals remain active. They keep alive rank and file organizations within their unions and lead working class struggles within communities. They are the backbone of anti-intervention and anti-racist committees. They build women's rights organizations and movements for gay rights. They learn the lessons of their own activity and help younger people understand these lessons when they first come around.

These activists are what Marxists have generally regarded as a "vanguard" layer. While mobilizing others to act they confront every day the limits U.S. capitalism places on what is feasible. They see the intransigence of government administrators who will not fund AIDS research in a period of fiscal austerity. They see the resistance of the new right, whose repressive "pro-family" agenda has come to dominate mainstream politics. To comprehend why their opposition is so great and their gains so tenuous, they need a more sophisticated analysis of how capitalism functions and how it shapes U.S. politics. These activists are the audience for socialist ideas because their long-term commitment to social change encourages them to develop a broader vision of how society works and how it is transformed.

Yet neither their radicalism nor their activity are enough to develop a socialist vision or strategy. Among those schooled in the larger movements of the 1960s, only a small number remain active today. But a substantial portion of those who are still around joined socialist organizations in the 1960s and 1970s. These vanguard activists best connected the knowledge they gained from their own experiences to a broader Marxist understanding of capitalism. Participating in organizations such as the Young Communist League, the Young Socialist Alliance, the International Socialists or one of numerous organizations which emerged from the Maoist left, they combined their own insights with those of activists from other sectors and drew general political conclusions.

Thus, a socialist organization can keep alive the lessons of the past and generalize from them. It allows activists from the labor upsurges of the 1930s and 1940s to meet militants radicalized in the 1960s or even in the 1980s and 1990s. Together they can put together a more sophisticated picture of how society works and radical movements are built. Its members can more easily connect their activity to their broader vision of how society is changed. A socialist organization educates potential socialists and acts as the "historic memory" of the mass movements.

Yet, having said all of that, building a vanguard and a socialist organization is not a matter simply of will. Movements are historical formations, arising when millions of people are willing to shout "no" and then do something about it. Similarly, revolutionary socialist parties that are real "vanguard" organizations arise when a substantial number of militants, in large movement organizations, come together to transcend the potential parochialism of their single-issue group and develop a more comprehensive strategy for anti-capitalist struggle. To understand how this has happened in the past, and how it will happen again in the future, we need a historical perspective on vanguard organizations.

III. THE HISTORY OF THE WORKERS' VANGUARD

We in Solidarity want to build a revolutionary socialist organization that can organize the work of socialists in the labor and social movements, educate its members as revolutionaries and Marxists, and win over new people

to revolutionary socialism. However, we have created an organization unlike most on the revolutionary left today. Solidarity members build rank and file caucuses in the unions, workers' centers and the independent organizations of women, gays and lesbians and people of color, even if these activities do not immediately yield recruits to our organization.

We reject the ideas that capitalism can be reformed from within by the Democratic Party or trade union bureaucrats; or that the socialism is possible without the fullest development of democratic forms of working class and popular power. However, we believe that revolutionaries can legitimately differ on a wide variety of questions, from the theoretical analysis of the former bureaucratic societies in the East to the tactics socialists should pursue in the labor movement. Solidarity is building this sort of revolutionary organization because we do not pretend to be either the vanguard party or its' nucleus. Therefore, we advocate revolutionary regroupment—the coming together of different revolutionary currents who agree on a common practice—as the best way to lay the foundation for a real revolutionary party in the United States.

Solidarity's attempt to build a socialist organization that is both revolutionary and non-sectarian, that has no pretense of being a party or "pre-party" is based on our understanding of the actual historical development of the workers' and popular vanguards in the United States and Europe in the twentieth century. Before the second world war, the layer of working people who, in the words of Ernest Mandel, "even during a lull in the struggle does not abandon the front lines of the class struggle, but continues the war, so to speak, 'by other means'" was both the sociological and political vanguard of the working class. Mostly shop stewards or rank and file militants in organized and unorganized workplaces, these worker activists argued for militancy and solidarity against the bosses, and for union democracy against the emerging bureaucracies in the established unions. They were also, in their overwhelming majority, socialists and revolutionaries. Put simply, the majority of militant workers before the second world war would have described themselves as "reds" of one hue or another.

In Europe this layer of workers grew massively before the first world war. Literally hundreds of thousands of worker activists across Europe organized in their workplaces and communities against capital and the state. Many joined revolutionary and socialist organizations. In Germany and Italy, skilled machinists in the large factories were the backbone of networks of shop floor militants who led strikes and slow-downs, often against the wishes of the officials of the Social-Democratic-led unions. These workers were the audience for Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebnecht, Antonio Gramsci and other left-wing socialists in the pre-war years.

As the left argued for revolutionary mass action, it often confronted the more conservative policies of the leadership of European Social Democracy. The social democratic parties had become advocates of routinized collective bargaining conducted almost exclusively by union leaders. Furthermore, within the social democratic parties, the originally revolutionary visions of Karl Marx and Friedreich Engels were giving way to strategies of parliamentary reform orchestrated by elected social democratic deputies and party officials. This more conservative, "reformist" strategy was most popular among socialist party functionaries, elected officials and trade union leaders. Reformism which became an obstacle to organizing the struggle against capital and the state even before the first world war.

The labor officialdom's desire for peaceful relations with the powers that be led them to identify the interests of the workers with those of the national state. Not surprisingly, they supported their own governments when war broke out in 1914. Thus, the social-democratic leaders pitted workers of one country against those of another in a brutal, inter-imperialist war.

During the first world war, left-wing workers formed the nucleus of the anti-war movement in the factories and worker neighborhoods as the official leadership of European social-democracy supported their own bourgeois governments' war efforts. After 1914, despite the initial wave of popular nationalism, pro-war hysteria and severe political repression, these workers argued and organized against the war. They joined the anti-war wings of the socialist parties in Germany and Italy.

In France and Spain, with their less developed industries, the workers' vanguard did not gravitate toward Marxist politics, but instead toward revolutionary syndicalism. The idea that direct workplace action alone could destroy the power of capital and initiate a new, egalitarian and collectivist social order made sense to highly skilled workers in smaller factories and

workshops. They led on going struggles to limit the employers' control over the production process and were, as a result, able to exercise considerable job-control. In Spain, the anarcho-syndicalist workers' vanguard included both urban and rural workers. A significant minority of agricultural wage workers joined the anarcho-syndicalist unions, and led numerous, semi-insurrectional strikes on the capitalist latifundia of central and southern Spain. When World War I war broke out, the Spanish revolutionary syndicalists led the anti-war opposition, breaking from their French counterparts who supported their own government.

The political organization and consciousness of the European workers' vanguard reached its highest point in pre-revolutionary Russia. Revolutionary socialists, in particular the Bolshevik wing of Russian social-democracy, had been sinking deep roots in the working class and student struggles since the 1890s. During the massive strike wave of 1912-1914, the Bolsheviks won the support of the majority of militant workers, in particular the skilled metal workers in the large factories of Moscow and Petrograd. At the center of working class opposition to the war, these "worker-Bolsheviks" were overtaken temporarily by the semi-spontaneous February revolution of 1917. However, their deep roots in the factories and neighborhoods, and their commitment to uncompromising struggle against both the Tsarist autocracy and the liberal bourgeoisie allowed them to assume leadership of the mass movement in September and lead the first successful socialist revolution in October 1917.

The social-democracy's support for the first world war destroyed the internationalist ethos of the Second International. Angered by the rightward drift of European social democracy but invigorated by the Bolshevik victory in Russia, much of the European workers' vanguard shifted its allegiance to the new and explicitly revolutionary Communist parties after the first world war.

While unable to break the loyalty of the majority of workers to the social-democratic parties during the post-war revolutionary upsurges of 1918-1923, the Communist parties were massive. In the 1920s and early 1930s, the Communist parties counted tens of thousands of worker members in Britain, Holland, Belgium and Scandinavia and hundreds of thousands in Germany, France and Italy. These mass revolutionary workers' parties were at the forefront of industrial and political militancy across Europe prior to the mid 1930s. They organized important "class struggle" oppositions in the social-democratic led unions and led unofficial

strikes and demonstrations against the employers' offensive and state austerity policies.

In the United States, the pre-World War II workers' vanguard was both smaller and less politically homogeneous than in Europe. But even here, most of the militant and active workers identified with some variant of radical, anti-capitalist politics. Before the first world war, most worker activists were members of either the Socialist Party (SP) or the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). At its height, the SP had nearly 100,000 members, scores of local newspapers and magazines and hundreds of elected officials across the US. While the majority of the SP's members were probably urban professionals and farmers, the SP organized a significant layer of working class militants. Rank and file SP worker members played crucial roles in "great uprisings" of 1910-1920 that established unions (the ILGWU and ACWU) among the predominantly Jewish and Italian immigrant and female garment workers. Often they clashed with fellow (mostly male) SP members in the emerging bureaucracies of the needle trades unions. The SP in the United States also recruited several hundred skilled metal workers in large factories like the General Electric plant in Schenectady, New York. These machinists led attempts to democratize the International Association of Machinists and transform it from a narrow craft union into a broad industrial union embracing both skilled and unskilled in the metal working and machine building industries.

The IWW was the most important organization of militant and radical workers in the pre-war United States. Organizing upwards of 80,000 workers at the high points of the mass strike wave of 1907-1912, the "Wobblies" educated a militant minority of textile workers, "hard rock" (non-coal) miners, lumberjacks, farm workers, steel, rubber and auto workers in class struggle politics. They recognized direct action in the workplace and community and democratic self-organization as the keys to winning gains under capitalism and creating a "new society from the ashes of the old." Together with the immigrant workers in the SP, the IWW were in the forefront of the struggle against the United States' entry into the first world war. Despite massive and brutal government and private vigilante repression during and immediately after the war, left-wing SPers and Wobblies organized strikes and demonstrations against the war and against U.S. intervention against the Russian revolution. The massive Seattle General Strike of 1919 was one of the products of this struggle.

After the Russian revolution, the majority of the pre-war workers' vanguard gravitated to the newly formed Communist party. But a significant minority of these activists remained revolutionary syndicalists or left-wing Socialists. Though much smaller than the far left prior to 1914, the Communist Party in the United States organized some 10,000 worker militants in the 1920s. The Communists played a central role in organizing the Trade Union Educational League, a network of rank and file militants in the AFL unions. They led organized challenges to the bureaucracies in the garment and mine workers' unions, and established beach heads of industrial organization among unorganized workers in steel, auto and rubber. With the onset of the Depression, the Communists helped lead a massive and militant unemployed workers' movement that blocked evictions and won emergency relief on a local level. Numerous scholars have credited that effort with forcing the Roosevelt administration to establish public works programs and federally financed unemployment insurance.

Between 1933 and 1937 a wave of industrial militancy established the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The Communist Party played a leading role again and its membership grew to between 30,000 and 40,000 workers. During pivotal events such as the west coast longshore strike of 1934, the Akron rubber strike of 1936, and the Flint sit-down strike of 1936-37, the Communists' advocacy of rank and file militancy, self-organization and independence from the Democratic Party and the Roosevelt administration was essential to victory.

The Popular Front and the Transformation of the Workers' Vanguard

The Seventh World Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1935 marked a crucial turning point in the political and social history of the workers' vanguard in Europe and the US. Stalin and his bureaucracy now dominated the Comintern and were determined to reshape Communist strategies to meet the interests of the Moscow regime. Fascism had smashed the workers' movement in Italy and Germany. These defeats, particularly in Germany, were facilitated by the policies of the Social Democratic and Communist parties. The social-democrats counselled passivity and reliance upon the liberal capitalists who were expected to keep Hitler from taking power. The Communists, under the political guidance of the Comintern and the Soviet

leadership, spent most of their energy denouncing the social-democrats as "social fascists" and down playing the threat posed by the Nazis. Despite calls by revolutionaries like Leon Trotsky for a "united front" of Communists and Social-Democrats to stop the victory of fascism, which threatened the annihilation of the workers' movement and its vanguard, the Communists and Social Democrats remained divided and passive. As a result, Hitler took power in 1933 without any opposition from the largest and best organized workers movement in the world.

At its seventh world Congress, the Comintern made a belated attempt to rectify its past ultra-left errors, by adopting the strategy of the Popular Front. The popular front was, in essence, the same strategy pursued by German social-democracy in the early 1930s—electoral alliances with liberal capitalist parties, participation in coalition governments, and the discouragement of all forms of worker militancy that could upset this alliance with progressive capitalists. Unfortunately, rather than preserve capitalist democracy as a lesser evil to fascism, the popular front strategy led to the derailment of revolutionary and pre-revolutionary upsurges. By 1940, the popular front strategy had weakened the labor movement, leaving it vulnerable to a right-wing offensive.

In France, the workers took the Popular Front's election victory in 1936 as a signal that "their government" was in power. While rank and file communists led a massive strike wave, including sit-down strikes at major auto and steel plants, the Communist leadership lectured its own members and the workers who followed them about the need to know "when to end a strike" that might strain relations with the bourgeois Radical party. The demobilization and demoralization of the workers over the next few years set the stage for the collapse of France during the Nazi invasion of 1940 and the emergence of the Vichy collaborationist regime.

In Spain, the results of the popular front were even more disastrous. The Spanish army, under the leadership of Francisco Franco, responded to the victory of the Popular Front coalition of bourgeois Republicans, Socialists and Communists with a coup d'etat in June 1936. It was only an anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary socialist led mass mobilization of armed workers' militias in the crucial industrial and agricultural sectors that stopped the initial military offensive. Many syndicalists and other revolutionary workers tried to deepen the revolutionary process in Catalonia in the Spring of 1937. The Communists, then in control of the Republican army smashed the workers' militia that had successfully stopped Franco. In the wake of the

disarming of the workers, Franco's armies began their prolonged and ultimately successful offensive against the Spanish Republic.

The Popular Front approach wasted many revolutionary opportunities in the 1930s and led to reactionary victories in France and Spain. Furthermore, it began the long-term process through which the politics and social composition of the Communist leaderships in Europe came to resemble those of the social-democratic parties. Even after the Allied victory in World War II, the Communists continued to pursue alliances with progressive capitalists in order to create "advanced democracies," as steps on the road to a peaceful transition to socialism.

The rightward shift in Communist policies was designed in Moscow. Yet European and U.S. Communists accepted the change eagerly and quickly. The conservatization of the Communist parties both reflected and accelerated gradual changes in the character of both their memberships and leaderships. Beginning in the 1930s in France, and the 1940s in Italy, the Communists assumed the official leadership of the major union federations. By the end of the 1960s, Spanish Communists had become the leaders of the semi-clandestine unions. The systematic demobilization of worker activism in the interests of the popular fronts transformed the Communist parties' worker members from rank and file leaders into labor officials. Combined with the growth of the party apparatuses and their cadre of elected officials, the Communist parties of Italy, France and Spain took on the political and social characteristics of the pre-World War II social-democratic parties of Germany, Britain and Scandinavia. Communist labor bureaucrats and elected officials could deliver higher wages and increased state welfare spending during the long economic boom that began at the end of the Great Depression. But the integration of the workers' vanguard into the labor bureaucracy left the labor movement in Europe unprepared for the long bust that began in the late 1960s. The European Communists' attempt to continue the post-war labor-management peace during the global crisis of profitability failed to stop the capitalist employers' offensive and austerity drive.

The impact of the Communists' adoption of the popular front strategy had even more disastrous long-term effects in the United States. The Communists were transformed, almost overnight, from advocates of working class political independence from the Democratic party and capitalist state, and of the need for a labor party, into the foot soldiers of the CIO leadership's campaign for Roosevelt's reelection in 1936. In the United States, the Communists developed the "center-left" strategy of a long term alliance with labor leaders John L. Lewis and Philip Murray and the emerging CIO bureaucracy. The Communist Party deemed these leaders progressive because of their support for Roosevelt and a collective security agreement with the USSR. To maintain this alliance and win staff jobs for their members, Communist unionists used their influence in the newly formed CIO unions to successfully block the spread of sit-down strikes in the Spring of 1937 to Chrysler and other non-union corporations and to discourage the use of the militant tactics and forms of organization that had been crucial to the CIO's successes in 1936-37.

The first fruit of the "center-left" strategy was the unsuccessful attempt to organize the independent, "Little Steel" corporations in the Spring of 1937. While hundreds of young Communists served as organizers for the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), they never challenged Philip Murray's undemocratic and bureaucratic organizing strategy. When the SWOC led a strike against Little Steel, the Chicago police opened fire on unarmed union members and their families during. The event was immortalized as the "Memorial Day Massacre." Murray and the Communists called on Roosevelt to condemn the steel bosses, the mayor of Chicago and the governors of Pennsylvania and Ohio. Instead, Roosevelt called for a "plague on both houses," refusing to rebuke the New Deal Democratic mayor or governors. The Little Steel strike was defeated, ending the CIO offensive in basic industry.

The Communists integration into the lower and middle levels of the CIO bureaucracy and their subsequent isolation from the rank and file deepened during the second World War. The Nazi invasion of the USSR and the latter's military alliance with the United States, France, and Britain led the Communist party in the United States to enthusiastically support the U.S. war effort. When the leaders of both the AFL and CIO signed a "no-strike pledge", giving up any workplace action in defense of wages and working conditions for the duration of the war, the Communists became its most zealous enforcers. Even more tragic than their public denunciations of the United Mine Workers' strike of 1943, was the role of Communist shop stewards, local

officers and regional staffers in the auto, steel and rubber industries during the war. Communist union officials, often elected as militants, stood shoulder to shoulder with management in disciplining and firing workers who engaged in unauthorized, "wild-cat" strikes over wages and working conditions. By the end of the war, the Communists' role as enforcers of labor discipline thoroughly isolated them from the ranks of the CIO.

The advent of the cold war cut short the integration of the Communist element of the workers' vanguard into the CIO bureaucracy. As the U.S. ruling class assumed the leadership of the capitalist world after 1945, it broke its war time alliance with the USSR and declared a cold war against communism. At home, both Democrats and Republicans used anti-communism to launch a witch-hunt against all forms of domestic radicalism. To maintain its alliance with President Harry Truman's administration, which was demanding a politically loyal labor officialdom, the leaders of the CIO purged Communists and other radicals in the late 1940s and 1950s. This historic divorce between socialist politics and the life of the working class in the post war United States left the labor bureaucracy of the soon to be united AFL-CIO without significant opposition. Like their European counterparts, the U.S. labor leadership has proven incapable of providing any strategy to answer the employers offensive that began in the early 1970s.

The Crisis of the Revolutionary Left of the 1970s

The recomposition of the workers' vanguard in Europe and the United States radically altered the political terrain for the revolutionary socialist left in the 1950s and 1960s. Gone was the sizeable, if not mass, working-class audience for revolutionary socialist ideas that had existed up until the 1930s and early 1940s. The long wave of capitalist growth brought prosperity to large segments of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, undermining the need for the tumultuous struggles that had produced and nurtured a growing layer of radical worker activists in the early twentieth century. The revolutionary left, both in Europe and the United States was condemned to political irrelevance and isolation for most of the 1950s. The isolation of these small revolutionary groupings began to end in the 1960s, as they recruited from the student, anti-imperialist, feminist and anti-racist radicalization. However, when the capitalist crisis began in the late 1960s, and many of these groups attempted to implant themselves in the working class, they confronted a radically different situation than the one revolutionaries and radicals faced in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the 1960s, there simply was no large working-class milieu educated in the traditions of militant unionism and class solidarity in the U.S. comparable to that which existed before World War II. Government campaigns of murder and repression against African-American leaders and organizations such as the Black Panther Party had a particularly devastating effect on the small and beleaguered layer of activists radicalized in the 1960s. While younger workers, many of whom were influenced by African-American and anti-war radicalism, did lead numerous "wild-cat" strikes between 1969 and 1973, this layer of workers did not have the strategic vision to negotiate the changing political and economic terrain of class struggle that emerged during and after the global recession of 1974-75. Unable to pose a coherent alternative to the labor officials' strategy of reliance on the Democrats and routinized collective bargaining, much of this new vanguard was dispersed with the factory closures and layoffs of the 1980s.

The revolutionary left of the 1970s—whether Maoist, Trotskyist, syndicalist or left-socialist—did not recognize this changed political reality. Most of the far left assumed first, that a broad layer of workers were already taking action in the workplace and would quickly become radical and anti-capitalist; and second, that the deepening capitalist economic crisis would transform the embryonic rank and file movement of the early 1970s into a mass strike wave similar to that of the 1930s. Revolutionaries who "turned to the working class" in these years believed that their main task was to build their party. Their goal was to win the rapidly radicalizing layer of workers to the their "correct line". Competitor parties were seen as predators to be smashed. Unfortunately, all of the party building efforts were small and socially insignificant.

The expectations of the revolutionary left of the 1970s were unrealistic. Along with other factors, the embryonic rank-and-file movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s was destroyed by the global recession of 1974-75 and the capitalist restructuring that followed. Much of the revolutionary left also underestimated the hold of the labor bureaucracy over the passive elements of the working class from which the officials derived

their survival. A paralysis of nearly twenty years set in before sections of the class began to learn how to struggle under changed circumstances.

Much of the tragedy of the revolutionary left of the 1970s flowed from our failure to recognize the decimation of the pre-war workers' vanguard. The almost complete absence of a layer of workers who had kept alive traditions of working class self-activity and self-organization in the workplace and community were the reefs upon which all of the "party-building" projects wrecked. As the party-building groups, or what we in Solidarity have called "vanguardists", went into crisis, most of their members became disillusioned with the working class. The majority of the radicals and revolutionaries who emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s have moved to the right or become inactive. The minority of organizations and individuals that survived the 1970s with pro-working class and revolutionary politics either dug into their union and other movement work and wrote off socialist organization as irrelevant and unnecessary or reaffirmed their essentially vanguardist projects and declared that the main priority was still to build their "revolutionary party." Solidarity is a unique response to the crisis of the revolutionary left in the US. We are committed to building a revolutionary socialist organization that avoids the pitfalls of reformism and vanguardism by coming to grips with the actual situation radicals and revolutionaries face in the United States today.

IV. BUILDING A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST LEFT TODAY

As revolutionary socialists and activists we confront a set of problems vastly different from those which our political ancestors dealt with sixty or even thirty years ago. The workers' and popular movements in the U.S. have suffered a series of profound setbacks since the 1970s. The employers' offensive has been largely successful. Unions are weaker today than at any time since the Great Depression of the early 1930s and those that survive have bargained away wages, benefits and working conditions. Meanwhile, Democrats and Republicans compete for corporate donations and upper middle class votes by outdoing one another in dismantling the social programs (unemployment insurance, social security) which the workers movements won in 1930s. Also on the chopping block are the greatly expanded Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, job training programs, educational loans—the conquests of the social movements of the 1960s.

There has been resistance to the employers' offensive and the state austerity drive. In the 1980s and 1990s, unionized workers have challenged concessions. UFCW Local P 9 at Austin, Minnesota's Hormel plant, the Watsonville Cannery workers, the locked out Staley workers in Decatur, Illinois, and UAW members at GM's Flint, Michigan and Dayton, Ohio plants have tried to fight back. In the past fifteen years, there have been few struggles and even fewer victories—the successful Teamsters' strike against UPS in 1997 and the UE's sit-down strike at Republic Window and Doors in 2008. Unfortunately, most workers' struggles, like the subway and bus strike in NYC in December 2005, have ended in failure.

Even the winning struggles had little resonance in the broader labor movement. Most of these strikes have been unsuccessful, primarily because of the strategy and tactics of the official labor leadership. The split in the AFL-CIO and the emergence of CTW, despite great fan fare, has brought no substantive new organizing or gains for already organized workers. In the face of the deepening economic crisis, the official leaders of both federations have accepted job losses and concessions as a "fact of life," deepening their reliance on the good graces of increasingly pro-corporate Democratic politicians like Obama.

Small networks of committed activists remain within the gay rights and women's liberation movements. They challenge the bi partisan logic of fiscal austerity when they demand government action to fight AIDS and government funding for full reproductive health care. Activists of color also continue to battle police brutality, anti-immigrant policies and attacks on affirmative action. New environmental organizations, especially those that organize working people and non-white communities, are also an important center of resistance. However, in the absence of a broad based fightback, these networks remain isolated and weak.

The struggles of the last twenty years have produced a new, but numerically small and politically diverse,

Photo: Jim West

workers and popular vanguard. Within the existing unions, there is a small and generally non socialist layer of militant workers who have been the back bone of the struggles against concessions and for the revitalization of their unions. Active in such rank and file, reform caucuses as Teamsters for a Democratic Union, the Take Back Our Union movement in TWU 100 (New York city public transit workers), and the Autoworkers' Caravan, or leading militant local struggles like the Republic Doors sit-down or the Stella D'Oro bakery workers strike in the Bronx, these workers have developed a "solidarity consciousness." This new workers' vanguard opposes concessions and various forms of labor management cooperation and embraces militancy and solidarity with the struggles of other workers in the United States and other countries.

The political orientation of this group of workers varies considerably. Within this very thin layer of workers, an even smaller minority consciously rejects the labor officialdom's model of "business unionism" and questions the logic of profitability and competition. With the exception of perhaps several hundred conscious socialists in the labor movement, the bulk of the workers' vanguard today has a contradictory political consciousness. Individual militants may reject concessions, "Total Quality Management" and other forms of labor management collaboration, but still accept the need for "their company" to be profitable and competitive. Other labor activists oppose the anti labor "free trade agreements" such as NAFTA and GATT and recognize the need for a break with the Democratic party, but remain open to appeals from right wing populism.

Perhaps the most exciting development in the last decade is the rise of community-labor activism, especially in efforts to organize unorganized workers in the growing low wage sectors of the U.S. economy such as garment, electronics, food processing, restaurants and other services. In parts of the country as diverse as Oakland, California, El Paso, Texas, Rocky Mount, North Carolina and New York City, working class activists have attempted to link labor and anti-racist politics in their efforts to organize immigrant and African-American workers. These "workers' centers", many initiated by veterans of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s, help educate a layer of worker militants to see the big picture of capitalist restructuring that has transformed their industries, communities and struggles.

Solidarity believes that revolutionaries today need to help rebuild this vanguard and promote the development of a revolutionary socialist current within this layer of

labor and social movement activists. In the absence of mass struggles, revolutionary socialist ideas will not have an immediate, large-scale response, even among the most active militants in the unions, workers' centers and social movement organizations. When people organize and collectively confront their employers or the government they develop social power and a radical consciousness. Without the lived experience of successful, mass self-organization and self-activity, the idea of a radical transformation of society will seem unrealistic to most activists. For the rank and file unionist desperately trying to build resistance to concessions or Total Quality Management, the workers' center activist embroiled in the difficult struggle to organize immigrant garment workers, or the reproductive rights activist organizing against the latest attack on the legal right to abortion, the notion of revolution often appears utopian.

While revolutionary socialism may make sense to only individual militants in the labor and social movements, revolutionaries can and must promote class consciousness and activism throughout the small and beleaguered workers' vanguard in the U.S. today. One of the main tasks of revolutionaries today is to organize and educate a broad layer of worker activists in the politics of militancy, solidarity, democracy and independent political action. The promotion of "class struggle" (but not necessarily socialist) politics through rank and file caucuses in existing unions, workers' centers, cross industry networks like Labor Notes, gay and lesbian, women's and African-American organizations and efforts at independent political action is both possible and necessary. Many of the activists we work with in our unions, workers' centers or movement groups may think that socialist revolution is impossible today, but they are open to the idea that direct action, alliances with other workers and oppressed groups, democratic organization and autonomy from the Democratic party are the basis for an effective strategy to defend past gains from the employers and the state.

The development of a layer of activists committed to class struggle politics will be essential to the success of the next wave of working class and popular struggles. In the absence of an alternative leadership, the labor officials and the middle class leaders of the African-American, women's and gay and lesbian organizations tend to derail these struggles into routinized collective bargaining, lobbying, Democratic party election campaigns and other political dead ends. A network of radical activists with a vision of class struggle will be able to provide an alternative leadership to that of the labor bureaucracy and the movement leaders who ally themselves with the Democratic Party, increasing the chances that the future struggles will be more successful and self-sustaining than those of the last two decades.

The presence of conscious revolutionary Marxists in this layer will be, in certain circumstances, crucial to the ability of militants to transform their unions into fighting organizations or building successful struggles against capital and the state. A new upsurge in the labor and social movements, especially among young people, will also increase the size and political radicalism of the workers' vanguard, creating the basis for the building of a revolutionary party in the United States. The practical success of a revolutionary strategy in a concrete struggle is central to winning activists to socialist politics and recruiting them to revolutionary organizations.

Although we believe that there is no large-scale audience, even among worker and movement activists, for revolutionary socialist ideas in the United States today, Solidarity remains committed to building a revolutionary socialist organization. We publish pamphlets on the crisis of the labor movement and strategies for rebuilding the reproductive rights movement. We hope to attract those individuals in the union reform movement, workers' centers, anti-racist, reproductive rights or gay and lesbian movements who are interested in revolutionary socialist ideas. We continue to believe that revolutionary socialist organization is the best means of recruiting and educating activists as socialists and Marxists, of organizing and guiding our movement activism, and of developing a socialist analysis of the concrete realities revolutionaries face today. By building a socialist organization today, we hope to lay the foundation for a new revolutionary workers' party that could affect the outcome of a revolutionary crisis in the future.

In accomplishing these tasks, we believe that the classical tradition of Marxism is necessary, but not sufficient. The works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky provide a foundation for the development of a revolutionary socialist theory. But they are not a schema for solving the variety of situations we face today. They do not tell us how to organize workers without citizenship rights, to confront the difficult issues of the relationship of class exploitation to gender, racial

or national oppression. The classical Marxist tradition does not provide concrete analyses of either the precise forms and limits of the current economic crisis of advanced capitalism, the global restructuring of the labor-process along the lines of "lean" and "flexible" production, or the road to working class and popular political independence in the U.S.

Solidarity does not have all the answers to these questions. No group does. The small size, organizational weakness and political diversity of the workers' vanguard in the United States today place severe limits on the development of any group of revolutionaries. We believe that none of the existing revolutionary socialist organizations groups—nor even all of them combined—can synthesize the experience of worker and social movement activists and provide a coherent strategy (known on the left as a "program") for socialist revolution in the United States today. Therefore, no one can claim to be the vanguard party or its nucleus.

We in Solidarity advocate revolutionary socialist regroupment—the coming together of different revolutionary currents on the basis of common practice and perspectives. In this process we believe that we have as much to learn as we do to teach from other socialist militants. We encounter many comrades from other socialist traditions in our activism in union reform groups, workers' centers and other movement organizations. Many of them do not share our assessment of China, Cuba, or the former Soviet Union. Some do not believe it makes sense to build a socialist organization today. Others do not share our emphasis on building rank and file movements in the existing unions. And many have unwarranted confidence in the potential of using the Democratic Party to build the workers' and social movements. While we believe we have many useful ideas to contribute, we also recognize that we have much to learn. Many of these comrades have extensive experience organizing the fastest growing sectors of the U.S. working class—the predominantly immigrant, largely undocumented, and often female workers in low wage industries in the United States. This experience gives them profound insights into several important questions. They have had to address the relationship between workplace and community organizing in concrete terms, not just in theory. They have strategized about how to deal with the existing bureaucratic unions while building rank and file workers' committees in the plants and workers' centers in the communities. Along with anti-racist activists, these comrades have strategized about how to rebuild social power within communities of color. On these, and other issues, we in Solidarity have much to learn.

Our open, experimental and modest approach to politics is essential to promoting revolutionary regroupment today and in the future. We hope that our perspective will allow us and other revolutionaries to develop a healthy give and take with the significant new layer of radical workers who will emerge from the next upsurge of working class and popular struggles in the United States. To prepare for this upsurge, the revolutionary left needs both a body of concrete strategies and tactics for the working class struggle to bring to these newly radicalized workers, and a method of work and discussion that will allow us to learn from this new vanguards' experiences and theorization. Only through this sort of synthesis of revolutionary socialists and a sizeable layer of radicalized workers will the real core of a revolutionary party be created in the United States.

Join Solidarity

If you are an activist and you find the analysis in this pamphlet convincing, we urge you to join us. We want to work with as many people as possible to both rebuild a layer of militant workers and activists and organize a revolutionary socialist presence in the movements. By joining Solidarity you are connecting yourself to a larger network of activists, many of whom deal with issues just like yours. You are also joining a socialist organization which values socialist theory and helps its members learn.

If your organization or collective finds these ideas convincing, we want to talk to you as well. We believe that bringing together groups of socialists and activists from different left traditions is one of the best contributions we can make to the rebuilding of a socialist left in the United States.

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A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST, FEMINIST AND ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZATION

Solidarity is a revolutionary socialist organization with members and branches across the country.

Today, we are active in strengthening a working-class fightback to the economic crisis, demanding an end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and building the labor movement, struggles for self-determination of people of color, women and LGBTQ and the fight for environmental justice.

The socialist future that we fight for has democratic, working-class power as its bedrock. We emphasize the need for socialists to build movements for their own sake. At the same time, we foster socialist consciousness through linking isolated struggles, opposing the logic of capitalism and making the case for revolutionary organization.

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For a list of branches, go to:
www.solidarity-us.org/branches

To email a National Organizer,
email info@solidarity-us.org

To get in touch by phone, call
313-841-0160 (National Office)

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Members are expected to have an **activist commitment** and **participate in the organization** —through joining a branch, becoming active in a working group, and paying monthly dues. If you don't yet meet these requirements, you may also apply for **formal sympathizer status**. To apply for membership, please use the above contact information or go to http://www.solidarity-us.org/join