

# THE **GUARDIAN** **SUSTAINER**

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program

## Guardian to boost party-building

In all the mail and other forms of communication we have received from Sustainers this last year, the subject that has received the most prominence has been that of party-building.

The overwhelming sentiment is that it is urgently necessary for independent Marxist-Leninists in the U.S. to develop some form of organizational expression.

The Guardian itself has declared repeatedly over the last years that party-building is the number one task of U.S. communists. A number of groups either formed parties or are about to during this period.

In our opinion these organizations are flawed by dogmatism and are incapable of developing into the kind of vanguard

party required to lead the working class to its ultimate salvation.

Many, many thousands of people who share our understanding of the need for a party also share our critique of those organizations already taking form. Some of these people are associated with regional Marxist-Leninist groups or small collectives or are totally independent of any organization. The overwhelming majority of them are Guardian readers.

We feel it's time for the Guardian to go beyond the stage of simply pointing out that a party is necessary. We've discussed the problem for a number of months inside and outside our staff and have come to the conclusion that the best contribution to party-building we can

make at the moment would be to publish a special supplement of four or eight pages on the entire question, defining the problems and prospects of forming an anti-revisionist, anti-dogmatist, Marxist-Leninist party in the U.S.

We've set a tentative date for the supplement around the beginning of the new year. If the supplement contributes the way we think it will to giving the party-building movement a push in the correct direction, we plan to follow up by increasing our coverage of the movement and possibly publishing periodic special supplements throughout the year.

It would be good to get your views about this soon.

## FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

### *On covering China's crisis*

By JACK A. SMITH

Developments in China these last weeks happened so fast we didn't have time to receive, much less digest, your opinions before we had to go into print.

So we're extremely interested in your views, now that the air is clearing a little.

As opposed to the position we took on Angola just a year ago this month—when we had the benefit of receiving advice from readers and Sustainers for several months before putting forward our views—we had to respond immediately on an important question we hadn't faced before.

We think the position we took on China's political crisis was responsible, useful and as accurate as possible, considering a lot of it is guesswork. We felt it was our obligation to go beyond merely reprinting statements and echoing whatever was officially being said in Peking. At the same time we took it as our duty to provide some intelligent guidance for our readers and the left movement in general and to puncture some of the hot-air balloons being hoisted by the Trotskyists and social-democrats. (The revisionist party is keeping silent for the moment, no doubt awaiting instructions from you know who.)

Most of the Marxist-Leninist press, being monthly, had the opportunity to wait things out a while and we haven't seen their papers

yet. My guess is that just about all of them will go down the line condemning the "gang of four" as capitalist-roaders. The October League's weekly has already subscribed to this literal interpretation of events, declaring in a headline: "'Gang of Four' Exposed."

For our part we think the best way to support China in the U.S. is to be as honest and informative as possible within the general Marxist-Leninist framework of support for the Chinese revolution and its huge accomplishments. And where we differ, as on the question of China's current foreign policy, to say so frankly and in a fraternal way.

Our general view at the moment is that it's certainly too early to tell the outcome of the "gang of four" purge but it's not a right-wing takeover, as the bourgeois press, Trotskyists, ultra-"leftists" and others are saying.

It appears to be a move by the Chinese Communist Party middle forces to respond to the challenge of the post-Mao-Chou era by eliminating a faction within the party that might pose an obstacle toward national unity and development at this stage. What makes the situation confusing for outsiders is that this faction was closely identified with Mao's policies in the past.

This is why we've chosen to deal with the

matter head-on. China's official line is very difficult for independent Marxist-Leninists to understand. So we've decided to explain things the way we think they are really happening—to eliminate confusion and to defeat the incorrect arguments.

Regarding Angola, mentioned earlier, we recently reviewed our year-old initial editorial supporting MPLA and think it has withstood the test of time, not only regarding the situation in Angola but all southern Africa.

During this year we have devoted an extraordinary amount of space in the Guardian to Africa and it was space well spent, at least according to your letters. As in Indochina, the Guardian played a vanguard role in acquainting the American people, particularly the progressive forces, with the facts and interpretation required to help build the support movement for Africa in this country.

Initial response to our general fund appeal letter, mailed a couple of weeks ago, is good—so far.

The next two weeks or so will determine whether our fall appeal succeeds or falls below expectations. If you haven't responded, won't you consider making an extra contribution above your regular Sustainer pledge? It's more important than ever that the Guardian secure its independent financial base.

# Practicality is the key

By BARBARA MINER

Well, it's almost 4 pm Thursday and in a few short minutes Guardian staffers will gather for our weekly study group.

We grab our copies of "State and Revolution," put away the ever present work piled on our desks and take off two hours from the "work on next week's newspaper" attitude that pervades the Guardian mentality.

It's a welcome change of pace. With the practical questions facing the Guardian as a backdrop, we discuss the theory that will help us resolve those questions. Although some weeks we have better sessions than other weeks, everyone agrees that the study group is not only challenging but necessary.

A number of new people, including myself, had joined the Guardian since the spring, and there was a wide diversity in political development among the staff. In order to overcome that diversity—also recognizing the continual need to study theory—we formed the study group.

We began meeting in September, after people's summer schedules had settled down somewhat. After two months, we've studied Chairman Mao's "On Practice" and are now hotly debating the third chapter of "State and Revolution."

Although it may not sound like much of an accomplishment in terms of pages, we've learned a lot. Study group leader Irwin Silber—who guides the group away from the pits of revisionism, dogmatism and irrelevancy that we sometimes err toward, keeps reminding the impatient that our purpose is to digest and apply theory, not just memorize it.

We started out with "On Practice," appropriately enough, for a very practical reason. The Guardian was emerging from an era of struggle and splits with the dogmatic lines of RCP and OL; one of the roots of dogmatism is a divorce between theory and

practice. On another level, we were using the work to help us decide how we wanted to proceed with the study group.

From our study of "On Practice," we asked ourselves: "On a practical level, what is the theory we most need to study?" The answer was "State and Revolution."

How did we arrive at the answer? We asked ourselves what were the practical questions facing our movement. And immediately the topic of party-building emerged. Why did we need to build a new communist party? Because the Communist Party USA was totally revisionist.

What theoretical work would most help us understand the differences between revisionism and a truly communist party? "State and Revolution."

The study group would probably not have suffered if we had first read "On Contradiction," or "What Is To Be Done." But it's important to ask what particular considerations face a particular study group. You can't follow a blueprint that says "All Marxist-Leninist study groups must first read "The Communist Manifesto," or must first read "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific."

And afterwards—back to the "on practice" of putting out the paper.

The last study group here at the Guardian began in the early 1970s and lasted almost three years. Some people who participated in that group are part of the new group, taking a refresher course, which they say is valuable. For those of us who have not spent years in previous study groups it's invaluable. Learning Marxism-Leninism is nothing that can be accomplished in a couple of months. That we've already found out. So we're looking forward to spending a couple of more years getting together every Thursday and learning the most important thing of our lives.



Lynora Williams.

## Williams broadens Black coverage

At 21, Lynora Williams is the Guardian's youngest staff writer.

Originally from Ohio, she graduated from Brown University in Providence, R.I., last spring and came immediately to the Guardian.

Her assignment is Black news and she handles the feature department of that name and general writing assignments dealing with the Black community and movements.

Asked for a few words to be included in the Guardian Sustainer, comrade Williams said:

"Work at the Guardian has been tremendously exciting for me, both politically and journalistically. I'm sure that I have learned something new every day since June, from the finer points of the southern African struggle to better understanding how to write clear sentences.

"The distortion and outright lies which are standard operating procedure for the bourgeois media in their coverage of the Black community make the task of the left papers that much more critical. For years, the Guardian has done a good job in writing about the Black movement, so I'm confident that it will get better, as it must. Being a part of the paper's efforts to improve in this area is, to say the least, extremely challenging."

### Guardian couple has first child

Guardian art department worker Denise Lyons gave birth to a boy in New York City Nov. 5. Her husband is fellow-worker George Finlay. It is their first child.

The infant, named Sam W. Finlay, weighed in at seven pounds and some change. He had the good sense to wait until production of our Nov. 10 issue ended before staging his arrival. The parents are doing fine.

Sam is the first "Guardian" child to come along in several years. All told, there are now four young kids associated with us.

Denise Lyons at recent demonstration.



# Social-democrats launch 'These Times'

By IRWIN SILBER

A curious letter came in the mail the other day.

It was the announcement of a new weekly newspaper about to be launched by a number of people previously associated with different left publications—the most prominent among them being James Weinstein, founder and publisher of the magazine "Socialist Revolution."

The newspaper, scheduled to start coming out in November, is called "These Times"—and at first glance the enterprise seems harmless enough. The advance package comes complete with a letter of endorsement from Rep. John Conyers of Michigan, and Weinstein has apparently convinced a covey of new and old left intellectual luminaries to lend their names to his venture as a board of sponsors.

A closer reading of the paper's prospectus, however, is more than a little suggestive of the real politics underlying it. For while the editors describe their paper as "an independent socialist weekly" which proposes "to begin making socialism a concrete public issue" in America, as they begin to amplify on what this safe-sounding generality means in practice it is clear that our old "friend"—social democracy—has reared its head once again.

Three examples should suffice to make the point:

"Our vision of socialism," says the prospectus, "is that it must flow from the American people's historical experience and needs, not against them. In this sense we will distinguish ourselves and socialism both from the 'radicalism' of recent years and from liberalism."

## AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

The editors do not say what they mean explicitly by the above, but it isn't hard to figure out. They are speaking of bourgeois democracy, an "electoral road" to socialism and of their opposition to the Marxist thesis of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the political key to socialist transformation. The clumsy slander against U.S. Marxist-Leninists that their "radicalism" is against the American people's needs and historical experience, is the prime ideological prop of what has come to be known as the thesis of "American exceptionalism." This theory—that the laws of social development and revolution uncovered elsewhere are somehow not applicable to the U.S.—prides itself on being "concrete" about American reality.

In truth, however, "American exceptionalism" is at variance with reality because it denies the self-evident necessities of socialist revolution in the U.S. against the most powerful monopoly capitalist ruling class anywhere. The question, after all, is not how to be "different" or unique. Any fool can spin off a "theory" or a scenario for what a socialist society ought to be like or how it ought to be achieved. But scientific socialism is an attempt to deal with reality as it is actually encountered in social practice. And by that token, the denial of the necessity for a revolutionary strategy based on the virtual inevitability of mass armed struggle, the need for a vanguard revolutionary party, the leading role of the industrial proletariat and the necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat simply does not correspond to the realities confronting the U.S. working class and its allies.

To go on. "Local decision-making and decentralization are goals of a socialist movement in a highly industrial society." Are they, now?

This is an appealing motif which is one of the more dolorous conclusions of the mercifully forgotten counterculture. But centralization of planning and production are essential characteristics of socialism precisely "in a highly industrialized society." Utopians and various other petty-bourgeois socialists always imagine socialism to be a step back into an "unfettered" past before the age of monopoly. This corresponds marvelously with the aspirations of the petty producer for the glory days of early capitalism. But socialism will be a step forward—not backward. It will take over the very productive processes that capitalism itself

has generated out of the necessities of industrialization—but will give these a new content by transforming the property relations by which they are presently fettered.

## DISPROPORTIONATE COVERAGE?

Finally, "These Times" tells us how it will cover international events. "We will particularly try to keep abreast of foreign political and social developments that are relevant to Americans facing similar problems. We will, of course, also cover events in colonial and semicolonial nations, but unlike much of the left press we will not give disproportionate coverage or succumb to the euphoria that so often leads to dishonesty and disillusionment."

Is it any wonder that Lenin saw an inexorable link between social-democracy at home and social chauvinism abroad? Is this what is significant about international events—that they provide mirrors for "Americans facing similar problems?" The American working class must become familiar with the particularities of other people's struggles because their own struggle is inextricably joined with the world-wide struggle against imperialism, whether or not those particularities offer us a "test-tube" of political experimentation.

And is this what is wrong with much of the left press—that it has given "disproportionate" or "euphoric" coverage to the principal revolutionary movements in the world in Indochina, southern Africa, the Middle East, Latin America? Can we say that the American working class already knows enough about colonialism in Puerto Rico, U.S.-backed terror in Argentina and Chile, neocolonialist schemes in southern Africa or CIA plots in Thailand?

A socialist world outlook implies a largeness of vision—an understanding of the interconnections between events on an international scale. But "These Times"—instead of broadening the political horizon of the working class and the left—would narrow it, confine it only to "similar problems" and deny the importance to the U.S. working class of those struggles throughout the world which must command their support because they are aimed at the common enemy.

Well, this promises to be a dull newspaper indeed—for it will confine the reality of the world to the small-mindedness of those who are always attesting to their belief in socialism while simultaneously reducing the question of revolution to the parochialism of the petty-bourgeois intellectual.

It is an irony of history that all such nonsense is usually described as an attempt to be "broad," to combat "sectarianism." And yet what could be more narrow, more sectarian, than to cut one's self off from the main historical tide of our epoch—the national liberation struggles of the third world and the revolutionary ideology of Marxism-Leninism?

"These Times," I fear, are out of joint.

## Silber to speak in West

Three meetings at the conclusion of Irwin Silber's trip to the West should be of particular interest to sustainers.

On Wednesday, Nov. 17 Silber will speak on "Party Building" in San Jose, Calif. at the Roosevelt Neighborhood Center, 901 E. Santa Clara, at 7:30 PM.

On Thursday, Nov. 18 in San Francisco sustainers and supporters will have a chance to talk informally with Irwin at the Buchanan YMCA at 8 PM. There is a \$1.50 donation.

On Friday, Nov. 19 in Denver, Colo., Silber will speak on the "International Political Situation and the Role of the U.S. Left" at Our Lady of Guadalupe Rectory basement, 3600 Kalamath St., at 7:30 PM. \$1 donation.

Guardian sustainers in these areas are encouraged to attend.

# Letters from our Sustainers

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

## MASS STYLE

R.R., Louisville, Ky.: If you want the paper to be read by working people it has to be distributed to working people (at plant gates, meetings, demonstrations, etc.) It has to be written (90% of the articles if it is really a working class paper and not one for intellectuals only) so that working class people can really understand what it is trying to say. Otherwise it will not be read by them and the paper's distribution will never grow among working people.

Workers in factories generally have a reading level that is anywhere from grade 6 to 12. Yet to read 50% or more of your articles one would have to read at grade 10-12 or college level (plus know a lot of Marxist terminology to boot). Silber's articles are a classic example. He writes as if we all had a college education and have been reading Marxist classics since first grade.

If you people just want to reach the petty bourgeois radicals and try to make communists out of them you can continue to write in your same manner. But if you are truly sincere in using this paper to help build a revolutionary movement among the only thoroughly revolutionary class—the working class and oppressed nationalities—then you must take a critical look at your writing style.

If you would take the latter approach you would find people like myself much more willing to use the Guardian in a truly mass way, as it should be if it is going to educate and guide us in our work.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

R.G., Fresno, Cal.: I want to commend the Guardian on its coverage of issues that many left papers ignore. I hope you continue to report on environmental issues. It is one of the best areas where we can expose the rapaciousness of monopoly capital. While much of the left may criticize the reformist and liberal tendencies of the ecology movement, we must remember what Lenin said in "What Is to Be Done?" and not let important social issues be yielded to liberals.

Communists must take part in all "liberal" social issues and give them a more radical focus. This includes municipal, neighborhood, school, civil liberties and

family issues. In the age of monopoly capital, class conflict spills out of the workplace into all areas of society.

Now, to touch on the most important issue the Guardian will be reporting on—party building. The Guardian, of course, is going to play a valuable, probably the most valuable, role in the building of a new communist party. Lenin outlines the importance of a national newspaper in the building of a party in chapter five of "What Is to Be Done?" (the relevancy of this book today is amazing). Certainly the Guardian Sustainers will be an important network and infrastructure in the process.

## PARTY BUILDING

F.R., Cleveland: How can the Guardian emphasize party building at this time? There is no mass movement through which communists can bring Marxism-Leninism to the workers. Clearly a very small proportion of U.S. workers will be influenced by any party which can be formed now. You will merely be providing the petty-bourgeois radicals with another organization for empty rhetoric divorced from mass practice.

In order to have a real communist party, it must be based in the most advanced section of the working class—not the petty-bourgeoisie. It can only be built out of a mass movement. The tasks of communists in this period should be to build such a mass movement.

## ALBANIA

G.W., Butte, Montana: The Guardian should cover the most recent events in Albania. They are of interest to communists everywhere. On internal policy, the Albanian Party of Labor has made some really pioneering efforts to restrict bourgeois right and fight revisionism. They've announced recently that they are decreasing the salaries of managerial and party bureaucrats, so that now it is impossible for the highest paid official to make more than twice the average workers' wage. They have also drastically reduced and in many cases eliminated bonuses. The ratio of bureaucrats' pay to workers pay is one key indicator of progress or degeneration in the fight against revisionism. In China the ratio is about eight to one, in Cuba, about five to one. In the Soviet Union, a bureaucrat can make 20 times the average wage of a worker, not including the dozens of bonuses he is entitled to.

On international questions, Albania has taken an independent and staunchly anti-imperialist course. They are opposed to both superpowers, quite often putting the U.S. in first place. Their stand on Europe is to

## Guardian calendar now available

You've probably seen the ads for our new 1977 calendar. Staff members John Trinkl and Denise Lyons put in many hours on the production and research, making this the most informative and best-looking radical history calendar around. We are sending one free to every Sustainers, with the hope that you will show it to people, give it as a gift, etc. (You might try getting it into bookstores—bulk rate is \$2 each for orders of 10 or more). It's good publicity for the paper, and a source of funds.

Last reminder: take advantage of our good selection of records, books and Chinese gifts in the Holiday Marketplace and help us support the paper.

denounce NATO in no uncertain terms, and call for fighting the hegemonism of both superpowers in Europe. Their stand on Angola was not a good one—they did not support the MPLA—but they didn't support the puppet forces either, saying they were tools of U.S. imperialism.

Although a small country, socialist Albania has much to teach revolutionaries. Denounced by the revisionists, isolated by the European countries and blockaded by U.S. imperialism, they have really shown what self-reliance and protracted revolutionary struggle means. They deserve our support.

## CHINA

B.H., Boulder, Colo.: The recent events in China represent a complex two line struggle the ultimate outcome of which is still unclear. The Guardian is to be commended for providing a careful factual account avoiding the flights of speculation that the bourgeois papers have engaged in.

One thing that has been demonstrated again is the necessity for Marxist-Leninists to develop their line and strategy based on Marxist-Leninist principles applied to their own situation. Those who mechanically apply a line developed in another concrete situation to their own situation without concern for the particularities of the problems they face will be doomed to failure. The road traveled by the revisionist Communist Party provides an example of political errors made due to mechanically applying the line of the Soviet Union.

## More replies, please

We have received a number of replies to the questionnaire we published in the last Sustainers newsletter but not enough yet to draw any conclusions. If you haven't filled out the form yet, please do and mail it to us soon. It's a way your voice can make itself heard.

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