

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



Re-Create
the Fourth International

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The Massacre in Beijing

A Statement by the League for the Revolutionary Party (U.S.)
and Workers Revolution (Australia)

The whole world was horrified by the spectacle of the Chinese People's Liberation Army indiscriminately slaughtering unarmed students and workers on the streets of Beijing. For authentic communists, the massacre was an agonizing tragedy but hardly a surprise. The People's Republic has always been the enemy of the people in disguise, and its communism actually capitalism masked.

The power of a state, any state, lies in its armed might. And the true nature of a state can best be understood by seeing against whom its weapons are aimed. The People's Republic of China pointed its guns at the people of China and deliberately mowed them down in cold blood.

ILLUSIONS IN THE WEST

After a history of oppression and exploitation at the hands of Western imperialism and its indigenous capitalist pawns, the Chinese people in 1949 would only accept a regime which claimed to be popular and anticapitalist.



However, lying is the least offense the Maoist Stalinists have committed. Today the regime offers unmistakable proof that it defends a state of capitalist exploiters from the exploited, and by the best means of defense the system knows — butchery. Bullet holes now mark the class line for all to see.

So great is the regime's criminal record that it has created illusions in once-hated Western capitalism. The Chinese students went so far as to make a model of the Statue of Liberty as their "goddess" and to hail bourgeois democracy. This sad fact occurs in the face of imperialism's record of blood, sweat and opium in China, only outdone by its acts in the rest of Asia. The atomic devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the saturation bombing of North Vietnam were only two demonstrations of the callousness toward human life that Western

capitalism has shown the Orient.

However, even tragedy teaches lessons. Many Chinese are already relearning that capitalist deceit is worldwide. In response to the slaughter of students and workers calling for democracy, the supposedly democratic United States, Britain, West Germany, Japan, Australia and the like all delivered stern taps on the wrist to the Beijing regime. U.S. President Bush "deeply deplored" violence, while his Secretary of State condemned it "on both sides"! Australian Prime Minister Hawke shed a few crocodile tears. Reasonable capitalists try not to let a few killings get in the way of doing business.

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Trotskyism and the South African Revolution

In recent issues *Proletarian Revolution* has focused attention on the debates inside the South African working class. Because the black workers in South Africa have emerged as the leading force in the struggle against apartheid, these debates express fundamental conflicts within the international workers' movement in their sharpest form. South Africa is an acid test for all tendencies claiming to represent revolutionary Marxism.

A document by Chris Bailey, "The Working Class and Capital in South Africa," appeared in the *International Bulletin* of the Rimini "European Trotskyist Conference" (see page 00). Bailey is a leader of the Internationalist Faction, a British group that claims allegiance to Trotskyism, and is also a leading trade-union activist in support of South African workers. The LRP has published a debate between Comrade Bailey and ourselves in our pamphlet, *Permanent Revolution and Post-war Stalinism*.

Bailey's document supplies some useful insights into the crisis of South African capitalism and the rise of the black working class to a leadership position in the anti-apartheid struggle. But he gives uncritical endorsement to the left syndicalist tendency in the unions and thereby neglects the centrality of building a revolutionary party in South Africa.

THE SYNDICALIST TREND

In the above-mentioned debate we already pointed to the danger of Bailey's subordinating the need for the revolutionary party. This retreat stems from an objectivist version of the permanent revolution strategy, a view that has led organizations like the U.S. Socialist Workers Party to abandon even the claim to be Trotskyist. The main danger in the document, however, is that

it will contribute to the disorientation among revolutionary working-class comrades active in the South African unions.

Cde. Bailey gives uncritical support to the left syndicalist tendency in the South African unions led by Joe Foster and Moses Mayekiso. Foster was the leader of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), which played a leading role in the development of the black trade union movement after 1979. Mayekiso, general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), was recently acquitted of charges of treason after an international defense campaign.

FOSATU's leadership built the union movement by narrowly concentrating on immediate economic issues while tending to avoid intervention in the broader political struggle. This meant that they offered no challenge to the political leadership of the petty-bourgeois and Stalinist-influenced African National Congress (ANC), which aimed to forge a negotiated settlement with the liberal capitalists at the expense of the black working class.

Such a "division of labor" could not be maintained. The black upsurge that began in 1984 forced the unions to take on a greater political role. As a result of the State of Emergency in force since 1986, the unions became the only mass organizations still capable of organizing sustained struggles. While the township movement that peaked in 1984-86 has been crushed, the unions continue to engage in a massive level of strike activity.

UNIONS TAKE CENTER STAGE

It is no longer possible for the unions to avoid a greater role in political struggles. In 1986 the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was formed through a merger of FOSATU and other unions. Built in the course of massive social upheaval, COSATU

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“Democracy” Explodes in the East

Democracy appears to be all the rage in the Stalinist countries. In the USSR, a new Congress of People's Deputies was elected and held its first sessions. Poland voted for an expanded parliament, with the once outlawed Solidarnosc movement winning a big victory. Hungary is allowing open factions to compete inside the ruling Communist Party. And China, before the June 4 massacre in Beijing, erupted in an extraordinary student-led explosion for democratic demands.


In the West, politicians and pundits are saying that these changes prove Western democracy to be superior to Eastern Marxism beyond all doubt; after all, now the

agreed to enforce a no-strike policy — and to support the Stalinist party's continuation in power.

As a Peasant Party delegate put it,

“The Government is looking for a partner willing to share responsibility for unpleasant measures that are necessary to improve the economy. They want in Solidarity a kind of fireman specialized in preserving social peace.” (*New York Times*, Feb. 20.)

Solidarnosc also joined the Jaruzelski regime in appealing for financial aid from the West. The labor leaders' offer of cooperation to the International Monetary Fund is more significant than the government's,



Walesa and Jaruzelski laugh it up. Unfortunately the “joke” is on the Polish working class.

Communists admit it themselves. But the truth is that the events show something very different: the great power of the working class for change and its inherent socialist direction. These are not antidotes to Marxism but its most fundamental teachings.

The appearance of democracy is not the reality. In East Europe the government-sponsored democratic concessions are severely restricted. They do not mean “people's power”; on the contrary, they are desperate attempts to deal with the crisis of statified capitalism in the face of economic collapse and the power of a restive proletariat. Their main aims are to preempt potential working-class struggles and convince workers to accept more intense exploitation.

Pseudo-democratic reforms have become necessary because Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* and similar promises of economic reform have not worked. For good reason: workers do not trust the “red bourgeoisies” who have ruled over them for decades. So the bosses are now yielding a limited voice in government while retaining overall control — in return, they hope, for greater compliance by the workers in the factories.

POLAND: PACIFICATION FOR EXPLOITATION

The clearest case of bureaucratic desperation is Poland. Here the bureaucracy has re-legalized Solidarnosc, the union movement that it drove underground in the military coup of 1981. In return for the right to sit in a new parliamentary senate and for a minority share of the still dominant older house, Lech Walesa & Co.

since they have influence among the workers.

Militant workers, including Solidarnosc activists, did not buy the Jaruzelski-Walesa “round table” deal. Wildcat strikes in mines and textile plants broke out during the negotiations. Strikers in Gdansk formed an Interfactory Organizing Committee, echoing the soviet-type bodies created during the momentous events of 1980. A union poll of workers in Warsaw early in the campaign showed that 30 percent favored boycotting the planned elections.

One Solidarnosc candidate, also an economist, said that a frequent question voters asked of him was, “Do you think that these Communists first sold us to the Russians, and now that the water is up to their necks, they're going to sell us to the West Germans and Americans?” (*New York Times*, May 30.)

Andrzej Gwiazda, the left Solidarnosc leader and a boycott proponent, declared, “Thanks to the support of the American State Department, a policy of reconciliation and reform has been imposed in Poland.” He went on to attack Walesa's deal with the regime, and added:

“Its base will be a pact that will permit the conciliating group — labeled the ‘constructive opposition’ — to obtain certain political concessions in return for guaranteeing the economic interests of the regime. This means that a portion of the opposition groups will assume responsibility for holding back society's rebellion against the low standard of living.” (*Socialist Action*, June 1989.)

These developments showed a certain class instinct:

voting for Solidarnosc, even though it originated as a working-class movement opposed to the labor-exploiting bureaucrats, meant supporting the class collaborationist deal to dampen the workers' ability to fight and keep the regime in power. But a boycott was the wrong tactic. Revolutionaries should have run for office in the elections to seize the opportunity to make their views known.

SOLIDARNOSC WINS VOTE

In the elections, hatred for the Stalinists gave Solidarnosc an overwhelming victory — although only 62 percent of the electorate voted, indicating some strength for the boycott forces. The “national list” of 35 prominent pro-reform Stalinists ran unopposed and was even backed by Walesa — and it too was defeated. Elements backed by the Catholic church who campaigned against other Solidarnosc candidates (and also for a law setting severe penalties for women who get abortions) were defeated.

The ruling party, as expected, called on Solidarnosc to form a coalition government with it; the union declined, refusing to take responsibility for the harsh austerity measures that such a government would carry out.

But Solidarnosc does have a tacit understanding to support a government of the discredited party forces with whom it struck its deal. As spokesman Bronislaw

Geremek noted, Solidarnosc would “assume its responsibilities.” It rejects any attempt at building an alternative government, not to mention a revolutionary one. Whatever regime results — party, technocrats, or a combination — will survive only with Walesa's toleration. Solidarnosc will share responsibility even though it shuns office.

It will bear even greater responsibility for anti-working class programs if, as party head Jaruzelski proposes, the party offers Solidarnosc a majority of the government after the next elections several years ahead. In any case, the Polish people voted unmistakably for a change, but — because of the Walesa-Jaruzelski deal — did not get it. It is not just the regime that mocks democracy but the “constructive opposition” as well.

ECONOMIC STRUGGLES AHEAD

In the near future the Solidarnosc parliamentarians will have to declare their position on Jaruzelski's “reforms”: price increases, privatization and plant closings in the name of efficiency. Some “experts” favor these measures as a welcome cold bath of capitalist rationality to get the economy onto its feet. On the other side, workers fed up with mounting inflation and threatening unemployment — and inspired by the electoral results — will forego any parliamentary illusions and resume their strikes.

Trotskyism, Property and Democracy

“Orthodox Trotskyists” have a tough enough time explaining events in the Stalinist countries, since they are blind to the exploitation of labor that motivates the ruling bureaucrats and drives the class struggle. But the current democratic upsurge poses a special problem.

For example, in May the Estonian Supreme Soviet unanimously adopted an economic plan that permits private land ownership and allows foreigners to own means of production. Like the other Baltic republics, Estonia has asserted its rights to declare national independence and to veto Soviet laws.

The expropriation and nationalization of property is a major progressive step when achieved by a proletarian revolution — as in 1917. In the Stalinist states created after World War II, however, these measures had a different content: they were based on working-class defeats. And the initial economic growth they permitted has long since decayed under bureaucratic rule.

Moreover, the Stalinist “planned economy” means severe restrictions on workers' rights. Hence there is a widespread illusion, even among class-conscious workers, that Western forms of property can provide a solution to the miseries of statified capitalism.

As for nationalism, in this epoch of capitalist decay it is a reactionary ideology perpetuating archaic divisions. *Internationalism* is the Marxist motto. Nevertheless, as Leninists we support national self-determination as a legitimate democratic right. The road to socialism is often obscured when national

oppression appears as the main obstacle to a decent life. Removing imperialism's direct domination can expose the underlying class oppression of capitalism.

But the Baltic declarations are not easily dealt with by the orthodoxists, who believe that nationalized property makes the Stalinist states proletarian. The right of self-determination is openly in conflict, not just with economic forms but with the class nature of the state. National independence under these circumstances must mean social counterrevolution.

The same problem is raised by the democratic movements. They too raise democracy as an ideal above state property, and some of their leaders openly proclaim private capitalism as their goal.

Groups like the Spartacists and the Bolshevik Tendency, for whom Stalinist rule is the only sure defense of nationalized property, have already lined up with the regimes against popular movements and will likely do so again. Logically they should side with Great Russian reaction (or, in a parallel case, with Serbian domination over other Yugoslav nationalities). That will preserve state property — but only for a historical moment, since the hard Stalinists also seek to adopt Western methods of exploitation.

Others like the Mandelites will choose “democracy” over property forms. Thus they will prove once again that their theory is empty phrasemongering and that they are radical democrats, not communists, at bottom.

Either way, the nationalist eruption exposes the insoluble contradictions of the pseudo-Trotskyist “deformed/degenerated workers' state” theory. ■

An indication of the road ahead for Poland's economy came on the eve of the voting. Walesa met with a Polish-born American heiress who offered to buy and operate part of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, scheduled for closure by the regime. And it now seems that an amalgam of foreign and Polish private capitalists will own the yard with strict prohibitions against any union presence and a vastly reduced workforce.

Privatization of state property would not be unprecedented. As Gwiazda said:

"We are seeing a generalization of phenomena such as the creation by several directors of limited companies taking exclusive charge of selling all the products made by the factories that they manage. ... The managers thus profit from their positions and from the public infrastructure to pocket income from selling state production to other state enterprises. This is robbery." (*International Viewpoint*, February 6.)

So it is. Poland's economy is already about 30 percent privatized. Many ruling bureaucrats, the "kleptocracy," feed off private industry as well as state firms by taking bribes and posts on boards of directors. A feature of privatization that makes it preferable to the bosses over even decentralized state property is that workers in private firms do not have the same, however limited, rights to join unions.

Working-class militants and authentic communists need to fight against all the anti-worker currents by organizing the kernel of a proletarian revolutionary party. Essential to the program of such a party in Poland are repudiation of the international debt, establishing a genuinely centralized economy, and expropriating the plants the regime wants to shut down. (In "The Death Agony of Stalinism" in our previous issue we outlined a fuller program of transitional demands.)

HUNGARY: "RELIABILITY AND STABILITY"

In Hungary, the political situation is less polarized along class lines, although economic conditions are worsening (but are still not as bad as Poland's). But the rulers' strategy is similar. Major figures in the party,

including Politburo member Imre Pozsgay, advocate a multi-party system to replace one-party rule. Some spokesmen say that an open election may take place later this year.

The idea is to erect a structure of checks and balances in order to correct economic disasters and gain the confidence of Western banks and governments, whose funds Hungary needs both for investment and to pay off its large per capita national debt. Prime Minister Miklos Nemeth suggested economic measures like making the currency convertible and added:

"The other element of creating confidence is political reliability and stability, because nobody would invest in a place where they had to fear civil war breaking out the next day or have on their minds a fear that 'those communists' will change their minds and in five years nationalize it." (*New York Times*, May 15.)

It is indeed clear that private capitalists need have no fear that the ruling Communist Parties will seize their property. But raising the question of civil war is significant. The Hungarian workers have proved themselves capable of not only civil war but proletarian revolution. The 1956 revolution against Stalinism was defeated only through the intervention of Soviet tanks.

The regime has now admitted that what it always called the "counterrevolution" was a tremendously popular movement based on both socialist and national aspirations. Such admissions, as well as the upcoming elections that will reduce party domination, are designed to preempt the formation of independent workers' organizations. The regime's only hope is to keep the working class quiescent.

So it too has embarked on a democratic experiment. "Pluralism" in the party will allow the expression of different points of view, including openly capitalist ones. The party youth organization has already retitled itself the "Union of Democratic Youth," avoiding not only the Communist label but also any overt identification with socialism.

All these changes are ultimately aimed at keeping the workers from going into motion. Even the dissident



What Mario Cuomo conceals, *Proletarian Revolution* reveals: the Governor has no clothes! (See page 24.)

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intellectual Gyorgy Markus, widely admired in academic circles for his "neo-Marxist" analysis of Stalinism, warns of a working-class explosion. His "positive alternative" is a multi-party system with a Western European-style mixed economy. As journalist Diana Johnstone aptly summed up:

"What Hungarian intellectuals fear is not a repetition of 1956, with the Soviet army intervening to put down their movement, but rather an uncontrolled 'explosion' of their own industrial working class, which has been exalted as the vanguard of social progress and is now about to be shoved into the ash can of history." (*In These Times*, May 3.)

That academics and bosses fear the movement of the working class is expected. It is up to the workers to organize themselves independently of all alien social forces in their own class interests.

USSR: BUREAUCRACY REJECTED

In the Soviet Union, millions of people took advantage of the March 26 elections to show their hatred

for the ruling bureaucracy. Party leaders identified with bureaucratic privileges and arrogance, even some running unopposed in Leningrad and Kiev, were rejected by the voters. The dissident "populist" bureaucrat Boris Yeltsin won overwhelming support in Moscow. In the Baltic republics of Estonia and Lithuania, "People's Fronts" dedicated to national independence won large majorities. But otherwise the party apparatus controlled most of the constituencies and allowed little leeway. (The fascistic group Pamyat ran candidates in sixteen constituencies and lost in all of them.)

The new electoral process, created under Gorbachev's *glasnost* as a weapon against sectors of the entrenched bureaucracy, produced only slight inroads into the Communist Party monopoly. When the Congress met in May it was heavily dominated by party bureaucrats, as was the new Supreme Soviet it elected. It is evident that Gorbachev's *glasnost* means only openness and not democracy: dissidents can speak openly (which is more than they could before) but cannot share power.

As Adam Michnik observed, Moscow's *glasnost* was

Massacre

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Gorbachev has not allowed his Western counterparts to outdo him. When he visited Beijing, he derided the students who looked to him with great hope as "hot-heads." Since then the Soviet media has sided with Deng by suppressing news of the massacre.

THE ROLE OF STALINISM

Stalinism everywhere has played the same role as in China. Under the banners of populism and nationalism, it diverted the working class from making the international and socialist revolution. It thereby attempted once again to deliver the world into the hands of imperialism. Gorbachev in Russia, Jaruzelski in Poland, Deng in China, the Stalinist Communist Parties and their fellow-traveling "progressives" elsewhere all now embrace the capitalist market and its Trojan horse labeled "democracy."

The "democracy" of Bush and Gorbachev means allowing the masses to feel they have a stake in the status quo so that they will not rebel against the greater profit rates and greater exploitation world capitalism, East and West, needs to survive its present crisis. It does not mean the genuine attempt by masses to control their own destinies. It means the bombing of Libya, the sacking of Grenada, the bleeding of Nicaragua, the repression of blacks in South Africa, the serial slaughter of Palestinians in Palestine, the bloodsucking repayments demanded of workers and peasants in poverty-stricken "third world" nations. It means Gorbachev's murder of Armenians and Deng's butchery in Beijing.

The bullets showed that Chinese capitalism cannot tolerate even bourgeois democracy. The workers rose up not simply to get the right to vote or to support students. Inflation, unemployment and poverty, accelerated by the market reforms, drove them into the streets. The capitalist dream of a new China, profiting on the world market and sharing the imperialist exploitation of its

cheap labor, could not survive in a state where workers' votes had to be bought. Given this, the only Chinese capitalist road conceivable, student illusions in Stalinist "liberals" were suicidal. Democracy was, and is, only possible through socialist revolution led by the workers.

AUTHENTIC COMMUNISM

Contrary to bourgeois propaganda in the West, the Chinese demonstrators were not simply idolaters of capitalist reform; the constant singing of the proletarian communist anthem, "The Internationale," proves that contradictory consciousness pervaded the masses. The underlying knowledge that capitalism is bestial still exists, despite the Maos, the Dengs and the Zhaos. What is needed is an authentic Chinese Trotskyist party, a section of a re-created Fourth International. Such a party would immediately fight for a general strike of the working class all across China to halt the current repression.

In the West, the task of authentic Trotskyists is to fight for workers' sanctions against the Chinese rulers, independent of the bosses' hypocritical measures. The struggle for workers' sanctions against all goods going to China should demand freedom for the jailed protesters, as well as freedom for Chinese workers to form independent unions and to enjoy all other democratic rights. While we lead in the fight for such united class actions, we also make clear our view that defending democracy, West as well as East, is impossible without socialist revolution.

To that end, we dedicate ourselves again to exposing all traducers of the liberationist message of Marxism. Authentic communism will triumph in the working class only as a result of a struggle against all those liars and misleaders who have perpetuated the belief that Stalinism is in any way progressive. To the extent that leftists have aided that illusion, that is the extent that they, together with Deng, and the imperialists, have the blood of the Beijing martyrs on their hands.■

June 13, 1989

made in Gdansk. A Polish working-class-type of upheaval must be preempted at all costs.

CHINA'S EXPLOSION

The most significant and extraordinary events took place in China, where changes were demanded *from below*. Mass rallies reached a peak of over a million people in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

The eruption occurred in the middle of a bitter debate within the ruling party over Deng Xiaoping's crisis-ridden economic reforms. It is possible that the initial demonstrations were instigated for factional reasons from the top, but if so they soon got out of hand. As a result of the mass upsurge, the Stalinist regime was internally shattered, and sections of the army were paralyzed for critical weeks.

The students' program was at first limited. Often their call for democracy meant little more than the replacement of hard-line or corrupt officials by the only visible alternative, the party's then-general secretary Zhao Ziyang and his allies. (Ironically, only a few months before, Zhao was the designated hero of "new authoritarianism" theorists who sought to solve China's economic crises under a single all-powerful leader ruling with an iron hand.) Most of the original student leaders are themselves children of upper-level bureaucrats. Many displayed great illusions in Western democracy and capitalism — illusions nurtured by Deng's program of privatizing and profiteering reforms.

There was evidence that the student protests were assisted, at least at first, by factions of the regime. Student marches were not halted by the authorities; instead, police diverted traffic to make way for them. As one report noted,

"Another point of apparent agreement between the [government] leaders and the protesters was that the March would be limited entirely to students. On Wednesday [April 26], the day before the demonstration, plainclothes Public Security officers called at joint-venture hotels and factories along the projected lines of march and warned employees of these establishments that they would lose their jobs if they joined the students. During the parade itself, student marshals themselves kept out all other would-be demonstrators." (Fred C. Shapiro, *The New Yorker*, June 5.)

In this spirit, one of the most prominent student leaders, Wang Dan, told a *New York Times* interviewer that "I have one regret. I failed to persuade the elite intellectuals to give us direct support." (June 3.) The *Times* added: "While certain themes, like opposition to official corruption, gained the support of workers, Mr. Wang says he believes the movement is not ready for worker participation because the principles of democracy must first be absorbed by students and intellectuals before they can be spread to others." Some democrat!

MOVEMENT MOVES BEYOND LEADERSHIP

But the movement has gone far beyond its original leadership's control. The rank and file student base widened. Millions of others mobilized, including workers who formed clubs and unions and took action independent of the students. The militants ranged from hotel workers in uniform to construction brigades who arrived in Tiananmen Square riding their trucks and



Moscow banner calls for "All Power to the Soviets." Gorbachev's parliamentary bodies have nothing in common with the revolutionary soviets of 1917.

earthmovers. Their demands extended beyond democracy; they called for a halt to inflation, mass unemployment and bureaucratic rule.

This movement had the potential of transcending democratic reforms and creating a mass working-class alternative to bureaucratic capitalist state power. China scholar Orville Schell wrote in the *Washington Post*:

"For workers are not students. And unless the regime can satisfy the newly added discontent of China's workers — who are now jubilantly speeding through the streets of Beijing and other cities in purloined vehicles with crudely printed banners mocking party leaders — it is hard to imagine any meaningful resolution. Satisfying the demands of students and intellectuals was not beyond the means of party leaders, but the grievances of workers and the unemployed are so inextricably bound up with China's chaotic and corrupt economic system that there is no way they can be solved quickly."

The government's declaration of martial law was aimed more at the workers than at the students, who, in their dialogue with Prime Minister Li Peng, repudiated the workers' more militant actions. And when, at the end of May, the regime first felt itself strong enough to make public arrests, the chosen victims were workers who had taken the lead in union organizing or used their motorcycles to spread the mobilization.

The refusal of thousands of soldiers to take up arms against the Chinese masses had tremendous significance. It raised the specter of a workers' alliance with the peasantry (the social origin of the majority of soldiers) similar to the bloc that made the Russian revolution in

1917. But the students did not learn the historical lesson of winning sympathetic soldiers not just to be neutral but to join them — and supply them with arms.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

After the June 4 massacre in Beijing, civil war loomed as military units beholden to the various “liberal” or “hard-line” officials reportedly maneuvered against one another. The Deng/Li government has lost the masses’ tolerance. But what is to replace it? The newly purged Zhao is the obvious liberal choice because of his belated support for the student movement; restoring him is probably the only way the party could win any popular support. But it is equally obvious that as a Deng protege and would-be authoritarian, he is no real alternative. A liberal Bonapartist, he could masquerade as a democrat only for a time.

The struggle continued elsewhere in China, notably in the industrial center of Shanghai, and a more prominent role for the workers became possible. There is only one form of resistance by unarmed masses to the current repression, and it was on the lips of workers and students throughout China: the general strike. In Shanghai a general strike was carried out in effect, for a time, by the immobilization of public transport. What was not clear from afar was the degree of self-organization that workers had achieved.

When the struggle inevitably resumes, given the mass hatred for the regime communists and democrats should call for a Constituent Assembly for China — an elected representative body endowed with the authority to choose not just a new government but the content of the state power. Of course, anti-communist “democrats” in the West who rushed to the cameras to proclaim their support for the Chinese students, will now disdain calls for genuine democratic steps. Instead they will favor reconstituting a phony liberal regime over the heads of the Chinese masses.

In 1917 (and in 1905, in response to an earlier Bloody Sunday), the Russian workers formed “soviets,” councils that democratically represented the workers (and later peasants and soldiers as well) and challenged the rulers for state power. The crucial task of the

worker militants is to spread working-class organization, including not only independent trade unions but also workers’ councils across occupational and other divisions within the class and capable of challenging the rulers’ state power.

With such a strategy workers could take the lead of the movement from the elitist intellectuals and also win



Gorbachev to Chinese students: Drop dead.

the mass of the students to the revolutionary working-class program. The level and political leadership of the workers will be decisive in determining whether the new Chinese revolution advances to a higher stage or retreats under the banner of bureaucratic reform.

CHINA'S RULERS SPLIT

As we go to press, the statified capitalist regimes are facing an unprecedented worldwide crisis. In countries like Poland and Hungary, not even the Stalinists

Socialists in Wonderland

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, the sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*, the White Queen said she could believe six impossible things before breakfast. Some socialists employ a similar method, notably those who praise Mikhail Gorbachev for solving problems they really don't admit ever existed.

Take, for example, the Australian Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Here is Renfrey Clarke's paean to *perestroika* in the November 1988 issue of their magazine, *Socialist Worker*.

"The truth is that Soviet economic growth in the 1980s, stagnation years and all, has been dramatically stronger than the average for the advanced Western countries. ... The present Soviet 'stagnation' is of the kind that, if it were occurring in a Western country, would be celebrated in the capitalist press as a roaring

boom."

In the same issue the SWP reprinted a devastating summary of the Soviet crisis by one of Gorbachev's chief advisers, Abel Aganbegyan. But his view of the '80s was a bit different:

"The growth of the Soviet economy had markedly slowed down ... When these [price increases] are taken into account with the 4 percent increase in population, there was, in fact, no growth per capita over the last five year period, but rather stagnation in the economy."

What the SWP perceives as a roaring boom was in fact no real growth at all. Apparently they agree with the analysis of Alice's Red Queen: "Here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place."

Theirs is indeed a mirror-image world.■

believe their "socialist" ideology any more. In China, Cuba and the USSR, where the revolutions once had an anti-imperialist or socialist basis, some ideological force remains, but economic crises are undermining the rulers' authority.

Only in China has the crisis gone so deep as to pose immediate civil war within the ruling class. (Although in Yugoslavia and the USSR, the ruling classes are torn by a combination of national and class eruptions.) The roots of the division lie in China's economic backwardness and its historical subjection to imperialism. The nationalist revolution of 1949 sought to modernize the country through state capitalism (called "socialism"), but it could never achieve a centrally directed economy. As under Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (which nationalized 70 percent of industry when it ruled China before World War II), Maoist China remained a nation of independent baronies under nominal central control.

The violent conflict today is not so much among regional bureaucrats as between those dependent on keeping power centralized and others dedicated to rapid decentralization as well as all-out privatization. Unlike other Stalinist states, China combines a decentralized but still statified capitalist tradition (the still potent Maoists) with an element it shares with Yugoslavia and Poland: the kleptocratic, bourgeoisified *nomenklatura*. Deng, who had squelched two previous pro-democracy movements, plays the roles of broker between the two and salesman of China to Western capital as a land of cheap, exploitable labor.

If the chaos within and the struggle against the ruling class continues without resolution, the ideological conflicts could be transformed into regional ones. The rulers of the wealthier coastal provinces already opened to imperialism will defend their privileges against the interior. Thus China's re-division into imperialist spheres of influence is likely.

The one thing that is crystal clear is that bourgeois democracy is impossible in today's China. When democracy was simply a student demand, the regime could hope to buy off the protesters with limited reforms; that was the strategy of the liberals. But once the workers came into action, that solution could no longer work: the bosses can't guarantee a dirt-cheap labor force if laborers win democratic and trade-union rights. That is why Deng's hard-line crackdown won out.

STALINISM IN RETREAT

The electoral charades in the USSR and Poland, as well as the violent counterrevolution in China, confirm the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. The

promises of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, including national independence and consolidation as well as genuine and lasting democratic rights, cannot be



Workers on motorcycles join students in Tiananmen Square. Next time workers must have guns.

achieved through reform. A proletarian revolution that establishes a new state based on workers' councils is the only way to win the democratic rights so fervently fought for by all sectors of the population.

In the absence of socialist revolution, the road ahead for the regimes of statified capitalism leads backward. The consensus Stalinist goal is shaping up to be a return to the East European system of 1945-48, before all-out Stalinization: Communist Party rule, possibly with room for a loyal opposition, and with a mixture of state and private property. There would now be added the unique fusion of state and private capital that is developing in Poland and China.

If the workers are held in check through either their leaders' faith in democracy or temporary imperialist subventions, the devolution of the regimes away from statification toward a more traditional capitalism — in effect, a political revolution within a capitalist framework — could take place without significant social disruption. But any sign of weakness or disunity in the ruling class stimulates aspirations for much more fundamental changes among the population, especially the working class. The upheaval in China shows the profound danger of this route for the Stalinist rulers. ■

South Africa

continued from page 2

represents a far greater level of political intervention by the unions than did FOSATU. Its first task was to respond to the State of Emergency, and it threatened to call on black workers to burn their pass cards if the apartheid pass laws weren't repealed.

The worsening economic situation has forced the South African state to intensify its assault on the black working class. With the unions taking center stage in

the resistance to this broadened attack, the ANC recognized that it could not maintain leadership without gaining control of the union movement. Even though it did little to build the unions that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the ANC rapidly won influence inside COSATU — largely by fighting for the federation and its unions to adopt the ANC's programmatic document, the Freedom Charter.

Adoption of the Charter was meant to be a loyalty



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test aimed at intimidating and driving out leaders opposed to the ANC's strategy. As Bailey points out, the critical question for the capitalists in reaching some sort of deal with the nationalists is "can the ANC control the black working class?"

WORKERS CHARTER VS. FREEDOM CHARTER

With the ANC invading their trade union turf, the ex-FOSATU leaders were forced to offer some opposition. Elements around them put forward their own document, the Workers Charter, which, in sharp contrast to the Freedom Charter, poses the need for a so-



Moses and Khola Mayekiso leave Johannesburg court after his release. Victory shows workers' strength to lead anti-apartheid struggle.

cialist South Africa. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 32.)

While the Workers Charter represents a potential rallying point for a socialist alternative to the pro-capitalist ANC strategy, many of its proponents inside the unions failed to wage a real fight. The initiative in the struggle inside COSATU is clearly held by the pro-Freedom Charter forces. In the face of the ANC efforts to enforce discipline inside COSATU, the NUMSA leadership raised the Workers Charter in a hesitant fashion. Rather than counterpose its call for a socialist South Africa to the ANC's "capitalist document," NUMSA called for the passage of both the Freedom Charter and the Workers Charter. NUMSA's compromising stance was opposed both by ANC supporters and by open advocates of a socialist perspective.

A compromise which accepts the dominance of the ANC is especially tragic. The militancy of the ranks and their outspoken desire for a combative alternative to capitalism and its agents deserves a better guide.

Cde. Bailey acknowledges that the compromise "was clearly a mistake." It did not lessen the vicious attacks on Workers Charter supporters by pro-ANC forces. The attempt to isolate the left syndicalists included efforts at sabotaging the Mayekiso defense campaign. In Britain, ANC supporters in the Anti-Apartheid movement initially went so far as to ask British trade unions not to support the campaign for Mayekiso's release.

Bailey is wrong to see NUMSA's compromise over the Freedom Charter as simply a mistake. It was no iso-

lated error but part of a continuous pattern of adapting to ANC hegemony. Bailey offers no explanation of why, despite the history of ANC efforts to treat its opponents as pariahs, the left syndicalists continue to compromise with the nationalists. One can sympathize with the tremendous pressure brought to bear on the ANC's critics: physical violence and verbal threats are the normal way the ANC deals with opponents on the left. Nevertheless, by holding back opposition to the ANC's political strategy, the syndicalists have failed to defend the interests of the working class.

AN OVERRIDING DANGER

The danger of ceding the political sphere to the pro-capitalist ANC is that now the very existence of the unions and the anti-apartheid movement is threatened. Because of world conditions the days of "repressive toleration" are numbered. The 1987 stock market crash was a clear signal that the capitalist economy faces a major collapse. South African capital is particularly sensitive to the world market; its survival depends on superexploitation of black labor. The ANC's strategy of negotiation and collaboration with the big "liberal" corporate sector of South African capital sets a disastrous trap. These companies will inevitably swing behind the accelerating state attack on the unions.

World politics also has its effects. The Soviet Union's "peace offensive" under Gorbachev, compelled by economic pressures, will impact on South Africa. Moscow is already noising about schemes for wide-ranging discussions with Pretoria; forces politically tied to the Stalinist countries cannot be trusted to defend firmly the interest of South African workers.

PRAGMATIC PERMANENT REVOLUTION?

Bailey's analysis itself adapts to these capitulations. Not only does he uncritically endorse the Foster strategy, but he argues that the Foster tendency is acting as objective, unconscious agent of permanent revolution.

"In practice, those who have come closest to developing the theory of Permanent Revolution in South Africa have been those who were the leadership of FOSATU, namely Joe Foster, Moses Mayekiso and others around them. Often in a confused way, betraying the inevitably eclectic and pragmatic nature of their thinking, they have been responsible more than any other tendency for the present powerful developments in the South African working class. They have led the fight against the Stalinists for the independent organization of the class."

It is one thing to credit the Foster tendency with raising a working class perspective in opposition to the petty bourgeois outlook of the ANC. However, Bailey overlooks the syndicalists' failure to challenge ANC leadership. Thus he dodges the charge of "economism" levelled in FOSATU by the Stalinists against the Foster tendency. Bailey's only response is to repeat Foster's claim that "FOSATU's whole existence is political."

Foster's (and Bailey's) response is no answer at all. Marxists understand that even "economism," with its narrow trade unionist focus, is "political." Lenin argued that economism was a politically retrograde tendency. No tendency in the workers movement can avoid being political. The question is not whether one is political or

not but *what* politics is put forward.

In the face of growing ANC influence, Bailey's conclusion that recent developments "have been a tremendous confirmation of Foster's position" on the unions is absurd and dangerous. Bailey credits Foster with the development of democratically structured unions that allowed them to organize workers beyond immediate trade union issues. One example is the Alexandra Action Committee organized by Mayekiso and others, which led important struggles and was without doubt a major contribution of the syndicalists.

But it has to be explained why FOSATU, which paved the way for COSATU, the largest independent union federation in South African history, has lost the leadership to the ANC — at the very time the working class took the lead in the anti-apartheid struggle.

What greater condemnation can be made of a political tendency! At the moment when it should be triumphant, when after years of struggle the unions have come to the fore, it has seen its political opponents take over. Yes, the ANC and the Stalinists resort to maneuvers and dirty politics. But the real problem is that the Foster tendency cannot become a real alternative as long as it fails to fight for leadership in the South African revolution as a whole.

To expect that the unions can go on as they have been and that they can deal with the task of building a revolutionary party later, when circumstances are ripe, is suicidal. It is based on the illusion that present conditions, bad as they are, will not worsen, and that the unions will retain their tenuous elbow room. The idea that democratic and trade-union institutions will inevitably grow towards revolutionary action is the objectivist counter-theory to permanent revolution. In reality, democratic and union gains can only be preserved by revolutionary action led by a proletarian revolutionary party, as part of an international movement.

WORKERS' PARTY AND REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Bailey cannot answer because he fails to address the critical issue in South Africa, the crisis of leadership. He doesn't pose the centrality of the struggle to build a revolutionary black working-class party. As he says, in addition to raising the Workers Charter, a section of the NUMSA leadership (those from the old leadership of the Metal and Autoworkers Union, a FOSATU union that merged with other unions to form NUMSA) "had gone further than this and were in favor of a call for the formation of a workers' party." Bailey says this drove the Stalinists into "a state of apoplexy."

Yet Bailey is unclear at best on his own views. He supports the idea of a workers' party but accepts the need to postpone a call for such a party on tactical grounds:

"The call for a workers' party in South Africa will need very careful timing. Such a party would clearly be illegal and, under the wrong conditions, such a call could bring down enormous repression from the state. This repression would undoubtedly be helped by the petty bourgeois anti-apartheid leaders and the Stalinists. It is essential to exhaust to the full the present legality of the unions."

Though he doesn't make it explicit, Bailey's statement is an argument against those in NUMSA who wanted to call for a workers' party at the June 1987 COSATU conference. But his tactical argument is in-

adequate for Trotskyists. First, it is correct to call on workers to create a workers' party, but it is duplicitous for Trotskyists not to indicate openly that *within* such a movement we stand for a *revolutionary* party.

Second, it is crucial to point out that the government repression argument originally comes from people who have done their best not to give to the black masses the weapons that they have continually called for. Revolutionaries must be aware of tactical needs but are obliged to stress the need for arms and union defense guards. Yes, arming the workers may in itself risk repressive moves by the regime. But can Cde. Bailey seriously believe that *not* arming them will guarantee the unions' legal existence?

PROLETARIAN FORCES REBELLING

In the current situation, only conscious revolutionaries will argue for such a change in course. That is why we must concentrate on the development of a revolutionary nucleus fighting to become a mass workers' vanguard party. Given the repression and the lack of arms among the masses, this might well have to be an illegal underground group; it is a mistake to counterpose legal trade-union activity to this critical task. Unfortunately, in centering the question of a workers' party around repression, Bailey in reality provides a left cover for syndicalist politics.

The syndicalists have always offered similar tactical reasons for not fighting the ANC for leadership. More than anything else, the recent struggles have shown that the black workers have continued to run far ahead of their leaderships who increasingly become a brake on the struggle against capitalism.

What has passed for Marxism in the last half-century has been "part of the problem, not the solution." Stalinists, social democrats and even pseudo-Trotskyists have disarmed the working class literally and figuratively and helped world capitalism survive. Yet new proletarian forces are rebelling everywhere. Disgusted by the villainous caricature of Marxism they have been fed (and in some cases faced), they are still fighting their way through illusions in private capitalism.

In South Africa the black working class is achieving class consciousness and anti-capitalist, anti-stagist politics more rapidly than elsewhere. Building an Azanian revolutionary party is central not only for South Africa but because of its immense international consequences. A fresh, vital fighting force of the South African proletariat emerging on the world scene could have a decisive effect. For starters, it would blow away the decadent dust-heap that styles itself Marxism — even Trotskyism — but in reality obstructs an authentic world party of socialist revolution. ■

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LRP Sponsors International School

The LRP held its first International School on Political Economy in New York over the weekend of February 17-20. Twenty-five comrades attended. Most were LRP members and sympathizers from the U.S., and there were also comrades from our fraternal Australian group, Workers Revolution (WR), the Austrian International Communist League (IKL) and the British Internationalist Faction (IF).

The School centered around three sessions on Marxist political economy, as well as classes on dialectics, communist union work, and Marxism and women's liberation. The classes, based on extensive readings, were rigorous, and the discussion was serious, spirited and at times heated.

Sy Landy, National Secretary of the LRP, opened the School by outlining the organization's world view. He pointed out that the LRP is the only political tendency which, a decade ago, foresaw the current world situation: the weakness of the Soviet economy and the devolution of the Stalinist world, the breakdown of the Cold War, and its replacement by the growing rivalry between the U.S., West Germany and Japan.

Today Stalinism — statified capitalism — is collapsing as a bastion that helps preserve world imperialism. As well, the middle classes and labor aristocrats, guardians of capitalist illusions everywhere, are being undermined by the system's deepening economic crisis. The oppressed and exploited are rising once again.

The currently dominant populist outlook offers decentralization, market competition and bourgeois democracy as the answers to mass needs. But this only reflects the dead past. The working class is moving towards leadership of the masses, but it has to rearm itself politically. Only proletarian revolution and the creation of workers' states can win the democratic goals of the oppressed in the course of creating a communist world. For this, a re-created Fourth International, the world revolutionary party, is the key.

RESTORING MARXIST POLITICAL ECONOMY

The core of the School's program, the sessions on political economy, were led by Walter Dahl and were based on chapters of the LRP's forthcoming book on capitalism and statified capitalism. These classes attacked academic and populist versions of Marxism, the Stalinist and reformist falsifications which have turned the science of proletarian liberation into a weapon *against* working-class consciousness.

The classes dealt with central features of capitalism like the law of value, the tendential fall in the rate of profit, accumulation of capital and crises. They stressed the changes in the system that resulted in the decisive transformation from its ascendant epoch to its present epoch of decay — of wars, revolution, counterrevolution and the transition to socialism.

Comrade Dahl sharply criticized the populists, especially those in Marxist guise, who view capitalism from the vantage point of the petty bourgeoisie. They believe that capitalism is driven by competition and the market rather than the capital-labor relationship of exploitation in production. Marx insisted that such people mistook

the appearance of capitalism for its essence.

This error interprets the contradictions of capitalism as a conflict between "haves" and "have-nots," not between bourgeoisie and proletariat. It leads inevitably to popular-frontism and "multi-sectoralism" rather than the class struggle. It also leads to a bureaucratic collectivist third-system view of the Stalinist states (one of whose variants is the "Trotskyist" deformed workers' state theory): no market means no capitalism. This is a superficial, common-sense understanding that has no foundation in Marxism.

DIALECTICS DISPUTED

The session on dialectical materialism was given by Paul White of WR, who argued for the centrality of dialectics as the method of Marxism in understanding the world. Despite occasional lip-service, the would-be revolutionary left has rejected the dialectic in favor of pragmatism. An example is that of the pseudo-Trotskyist Healyites in Britain, Australia, the U.S. and elsewhere — among the few leftists to mention dialectics at all. But treated as a complex ritual which only a few exalted leaders could understand, it became a tool not for advancing proletarian consciousness but for the very pragmatic purpose of cowing the members.

Cde. White pointed out that the left's rejection of the dialectical understanding that society is in constant change, advancing through contradiction and struggle, is no accident. In recent times the left has become the left-wing of the middle classes rather than the vanguard of the proletariat. It upholds the view that working-class consciousness is the result, not of the workers' gaining understanding through struggle, but as a beneficent gift from intellectuals.

Chris Bailey of the IF challenged WR and the LRP on the meaning of dialectics and its methodology. The dispute was long, intense and intricate and cannot be fairly summarized in a short article. We urged Cde. Bailey to respond to our written criticisms of his positions (one of which appears in the pamphlet *Permanent Revolution and Postwar Stalinism*), and he agreed. *Proletarian Revolution* hopes to publish material on this debate in the near future.

WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

Evelyn Kaye of the LRP Central Committee gave the presentation on Marxist theory and women's liberation. She critically evaluated the foundational work of Frederick Engels, his feminist critics and Marxist defenders. The article in this issue on the oppression of women is a re-elaboration of a portion of her talk.

The class discussion focused on the role of the family under capitalism, the relation of household labor to the production of surplus value, and the question of independent women's caucuses inside revolutionary organizations. On this last issue, the IKL argued that such caucuses are necessary to prevent male chauvinist domination of political groups, which severely hinders the development of revolutionary women cadres. Women were the ones who could best understand these barriers and could overcome them only through a

collective fight based on their experience.

In contrast, the LRP and WR held that when such problems arose they had to be fought by men and women comrades alike. They demand political solutions and often divide women as well as men comrades over what is to be done. In our experience in past left organizations, the independent women's caucus "solution" failed because it assumed a natural unity among women who held disparate views on various questions. Its patronizing support from male leaders too often resulted in the demoralization and political destruction of women cadres.

COMMUNIST WORK IN THE UNIONS

The class on communist work in the trade unions was led by Comrade Peter of the IKL and was intended to clarify differences between the IKL and the LRP. Our discussions in the past have been hampered both by translation problems and the difficulties of compar-

ing union structures in Austria and the U.S.

While the class made some headway in clarifying differences, these were not resolved. The Austrian comrades acknowledged that the LRP did attempt to forge links with fellow workers on immediate questions in its industrial work, but they also thought that we tended toward sectarianism in placing our overwhelming emphasis on building the revolutionary party. LRPers, on the other hand, felt that the IKL overbalanced its united front efforts so as to undermine its genuine attempts at party building in industry.

Throughout all the classes the discussion was by no means restricted to disputes between the participating groups. Differences among LRPers were also explored.

The School was one aspect of the international work of the LRP in building an international political tendency. It was a small but notable milestone in our struggle to resurrect authentic Marxism to its rightful place as the scientific outlook of the revolutionary proletariat. ■

Rimini Conference Toys with Trotskyism

A conference of organizations that label themselves Trotskyist was held in Rimini, Italy in March "as a practical step in the struggle to resolve the crisis of the Fourth International." The conference continued a two-year series of meetings and maneuvers, some of which have been reported in this magazine, aiming to "re-build" the International as a bloc among disparate centrist groupings.

The Rimini conference was organized by two international blocs: one made up of the GOR of Italy and the RWP of Sri Lanka; the other, the ITC, includes groups from Italy, Britain, Denmark and the U.S. (the RWL). Other sponsoring groups were the IF of Britain and the LTT of Belgium and West Germany. The MRCI led by Workers Power of Britain, the WRP of Britain and the FSP and WSL of the U.S. also participated. The Austrian IKL and the LRP sent observers.

In contrast to two previous conferences held in San Francisco, the Rimini meeting discussed serious political questions in some depth. It was also competently organized and democratically run, allowing ample time for all views to be heard. And from the point of view of its main sponsors it was undoubtedly a success: steps were taken toward the closer regroupment of some of the disparate organizations.

RECONSTRUCTING TROTSKYISM?

But none of this comes close to resolving the problems of reconstructing Trotskyism, which are political, not organizational. Aside from the LRP, all the groups stand for some or all of the standard pseudo-Trotskyist distortions of Marxism, including: the theory of "deformed workers' states" created without workers' revolutions; the notion that the Transitional Program is not an alternative to the minimal program of social democracy but instead to the socialist revolution; the theory that socialist consciousness derives from elements of the middle class and that the proletariat is not the sole agent of socialist revolution.

With such views it is impossible to come to grips

with either the collapse of the Fourth International after World War II, or the essence of world politics today. Nor can there be a principled basis for resolving the numerous political and tactical disputes.

For example, the GOR and the WSL have issued a "statement of intent," proclaiming their commitment to reaching political agreement in order to "lay the foundation for the joining of our tendencies internationally." It lists a few points of agreement for discussion and "practical work." But it also cites several important political differences, including the role of Trotskyists within social-democratic parties and the labor party question for the United States. These are more fundamental than the areas of agreement — showing the flimsiness of the bloc. As for the practical tasks mentioned, collaboration in international defense work ought to require no underlying political agreement at all.

WHICH FOURTH INTERNATIONAL?

Another example: "the Fourth International," whose crisis the Rimini conferees resolved to resolve, was itself the object of much posturing and maneuvering. Thus the ITC, which drafted the conference's final resolution, had to abstain from voting on it because it was amended to call for the rebuilding of the Fourth International. In Italy and Denmark its members belong to the United Secretariat, the main pretender to the title, which insists that it *is* the Fourth International. (The ITC's Danish comrades had to stay away from the conference entirely because of this gambit.)

At Rimini all the groups except the LRP, IKL and MRCI were looking for openings to create or enlarge unprincipled blocs. (In the case of MRCI this abstention was not a matter of principle, since they had engaged in such maneuvers before; see "Exchange on Trotskyism," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 30.) It is not enough to debate important questions; it is also necessary to resolve them through a deeper understanding of Marxist method and commitment to the proletariat. Of this there was no sign at all. ■

LEFT JABS

Dust to Dust

From *The Torch*, paper of the RSL, May 15:

"This past March, the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Socialist League met to discuss the organization's future plans and activities."

"It voted to recommend that the organization disband itself ...

"Our political evolution has taken the RSL in the past three years over the line conventionally drawn between the Marxist tradition and the anarchist one. ... Today our organization includes anarchists, anti-authoritarians and libertarian socialists, and both people who call themselves Marxist and those who do not."

Whatever they call themselves, these born-again "libertarians" have a lot to answer for. Today the RSL repudiates allegedly dictatorial Leninism. But in 1975-76 it repudiated authentic Leninist democracy when it dictatorially expelled its revolutionary minority, which went on to become the LRP. Of course, they have never repudiated the bureaucratic acts and lies they used to eject us.

Today they support the murderous, women-hating U.S.-backed *mujahedin* in Afghanistan; their representative in Poland expressed sympathy for Poles who welcome U.S. imperialism's arms in Europe; their press accepts the colonial-settler state of Israel and a Palestinian ministate as an unfortunate necessity. The RSL anarchists will compromise with any state — except Lenin's, and any future, workers' state.

Nothing so becomes this squalid bureaucratic cult as its imminent suicide. Good riddance.

Understatement

A headline from *The Socialist*, organ of the Socialist Party USA (November 1988):

Iowa Doomed in Atomic Combat,
Anti-War Activist Says

Comrades, you have a solution. Move to Nebraska.

Overstatement

From the Freedom Socialist Party's draft resolution, "Permanent Revolution in China," in a Pre-Convention Discussion Bulletin (August 1988):

"Is political revolution on the agenda in the second workers' state?"

"The FSP, basing itself on Trotsky's criteria for political revolution in workers' states, and closely assessing the developing situation in China itself, since its inception answered no to this question. We did so in 1967 and again in 1982 ... and we reaffirm this stance today, in August 1988.

"Mindful of the necessity to maintain a correct approach to the Chinese revolution, we have examined the latest developments in order to determine whether the time has come for political revolution. We contend that it has not, that the bureaucracy

can still be pushed by the masses to concede, short of civil war, to workers' control and political democracy."

Another triumph for Marxist science. And this prediction is precisely as accurate as the alleged connection between Trotsky and its apology for Chinese Stalinism.

Wisdom from Fidel

From a speech by Fidel Castro, printed in the SWP's *Militant* (December 16, 1988) without comment:

"When we answered some journalists' questions, we said that violence is the last recourse. It occurred to me to say — and I think that those who have studied the history of these events will share my opinion — if there had been wise kings, perhaps the French revolution would not have taken place. [Applause] And I said more: if there had been wise tzars, perhaps the Russian revolution wouldn't have taken place, or at least it wouldn't have been as violent as it was. [Applause]"

And if the imperialists were sufficiently wise, the threat of revolution *today* would disappear too. That means all we have to do is educate the bourgeoisie, not overthrow them! [Applause from the bourgeoisie]

What a neat idea. How could Marx and Lenin have missed it?

More Wisdom from Fidel

From an interview with Castro by Mexican capitalists (adapted from *Proceso*, a Mexican left-wing weekly, December 4; noted and translated by Sam Farber):

Q: "What guarantees do you have that Cuba will not expropriate our businesses?"

A: "Well, what guarantees did you have in Mexico to prevent the expropriation of oil, and what guarantees did you have to prevent the expropriation of the banks?"

"The guarantee that Cuba offers is that it is a strong country with a strong government. We are interested in the development of industry and tourism. We will open up and become 50% partners. We will do things well. We will not charge taxes for profits. Besides, you'll have a simpler and more attractive tax system than the Mexican."

Q: "Why don't you allow Cubans to invest in their own country?"

A: "Well, that would mean changing the system. We are capitalists, but state capitalists. We are not private capitalists. For now, we are not interested in changing the system, but we do want you to come and invest ..."

So much for "socialist Cuba" or "the Cuban workers' state"! Castro's regime allows no internal *private* capitalism, but it guarantees profits, offers government protection to foreign investors and competes with rival countries. And it knows how to deal, one boss to another.

The regime is state capitalist indeed. For now. ■

Women and the Capitalist

A new women's movement is being created by the attacks arising out of the deepening crisis of capitalism. The mass response to threats against abortion rights shows that women are mobilizing to fight back. But the April 9 demonstration in Washington also showed that NOW and other establishment leaders are dedicated to legalistic maneuvering and support for capitalist politicians. (An LRP leaflet on this question is available to interested readers.) As bourgeois reformists, they have a vested interest in perpetuating the lie that the capitalist system can still offer substantial progress for women.

In contrast to the 1960s, the collapse of prosperity and the economic crisis mean that there is little room for reforms. But the problem with reformism lies deeper: the very nature of capitalism, not just isolated aspects of it, underlies women's oppression in the modern world. A revolutionary Marxist analysis of the roots of oppression is a necessary starting point for those dedicated to women's liberation.

We will argue here that the proletarian family is a necessity for the capitalist system and is the fundamental source of women's oppression today. In developing this analysis, we start with the work that is generally considered to present the classic Marxist view on the oppression of women, Frederick Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Writing a century ago, Engels traced the enslavement of women to the rise of private property and class society and demonstrated that the eradication of these institutions was necessary for liberation.

For all its insights, Engels' work was flawed by its reliance on faulty anthropological data and an anti-homosexual bias. More significantly for this article, *The Origin* failed to utilize key elements of Engels and Marx's analysis of capitalism in relation to the family. The book's strength is its overview of class society in general. But its discussion of the proletarian family under capitalism is limited, as we shall see.

ENGELS ON THE PROLETARIAN FAMILY

Engels emphasized that the rise of industrial capitalism meant progress for women because it brought them into the social workforce. Along with the socialization of household tasks, this is a precondition for liberation. Under capitalism, however, women remained oppressed because they bore the burden of family labor even when drawn into social production.

"Not until the coming of modern large-scale industry was the road to social production opened to her again — and then only to the proletarian wife. But it was opened in such a manner that, if she carries out her duties in the private service of her family, she remains excluded from public production and unable to earn; if she wants to take part in public production and earn independently, she cannot carry out family duties."¹

Engels repeated what he and Marx had stated in the *Communist Manifesto*: capitalism was destroying the proletarian family through its growing exploitation of women in the workplace. The impact of early industrial

capitalism contributed to this belief. As well, Engels (like Marx) expected capitalism's early demise; he gave insufficient weight to offsetting tendencies which partially delayed the process of proletarianization and served to buttress the family. Engels discusses the proletarian family largely in terms of its internal relations.

To illustrate, he distinguished the proletarian from the bourgeois family in terms of male-female relations:

"Sex-love in the relationship with a woman becomes and can only become the real rule among the oppressed classes, which mean today among the proletariat — whether this relation is officially sanctioned or not. But here all the foundations of typical monogamy are cleared away. Here there is no property, for the preservation and inheritance of which monogamy and male supremacy were established; hence there is no incentive to make this male supremacy effective. What is more, there are no means of making it so. Bourgeois law, which protects the supremacy, exists only for the possessing class and their dealings with the proletarians. The law costs money and, on account of the worker's poverty, it has no validity for his relation to his wife. Here quite other personal and social conditions decide. And now that large-scale industry



has taken the wife out of the home onto the labor market and into the factory, and made her often the breadwinner of the family no basis for any kind of male supremacy is left in the proletarian household, except, perhaps, for something of the brutality toward women that has spread since the introduction of monogamy."²

It is true that the proletarian family is not based on

Family: The Ties that Bind

property. But to imply that the family could only be relevant as a vehicle for the transmission of inherited property overlooks the specific economic role of the working-class family under capitalism and many of the elements of women's oppression thus engendered.

REPRODUCING THE WORKFORCE

In Marxist analysis, capitalism is based on the exploitation of workers through wage labor. The working-class family is the system's economic unit, an integral part of the reproduction of capitalist relations. As a necessary component of the wage form of exploitation, capitalism imposes a sexual division of labor. Women are obliged to fulfill the wife/mother role in order to ensure the system a steady supply of labor power.

There are two aspects to the reproduction of the proletariat and its labor power. In the "traditional" capitalist family, for the daily revival of the male laborer — his eating, sleeping, minding his health and just unwinding in order to replenish his ability to work effectively for the boss the next day — his wife cooks food, cleans house and clothing and provides nurture in less measurable ways. The second aspect, the replacement of one generation of the workforce by the next, includes the woman's biological role in giving birth and her social role in rearing children.

As with any commodity, the value of labor power is based on the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the worker's maintenance and reproduction. This cost must be covered by the workers' wage. Thus the wage is not an individual payment; it also has to maintain all family members who do not work. But while the wage reflects the value of labor power, this value is not just the bare minimum needed for physical survival. As Marx states:

"The number and extent of his so-called necessary requirements, as also the manner in which they are satisfied, are themselves products of history, and depend therefore, to a great extent on the level of civilization attained by a country; in particular, they depend on the conditions in which, and consequently on the habits and expectations with which, the class of free workers has been formed. In contrast, therefore, with the case of other commodities, the determination of the value of labor power contains a historical and moral element."

The "historical and moral element" is a product of both the class struggle and the bourgeoisie's requirements for workers of a particular cultural level, skill and capacity. This element can play the principal role in determining the value of labor power.

THE FAMILY WAGE

One way in which it does is that the wage can vary with the number of family members who are expected to work for wages in a given period. Today the "family wage" has come to mean the particular setup of a nuclear family with male wage earner, cared for by a housewife who also cares for the children and home.

But it was not always so.

At the start of industrialization, men were being thrown out of their craft jobs as mechanization made it easier and cheaper to employ women and children. When the factory system began to employ three children and a woman in place of a man: "now four times as many workers' lives are used up in order to gain a livelihood for one workers' family."⁴ The value of labor power decreased, since now it took four wage-earners



to earn what had been the norm for one. In this scenario the unemployed male worker became dependent on his wife and children. It meant a type of family wage, but it did not last. The brutality of early industrialization threatened to destroy the working class altogether by killing off women and children at a high rate.

This superexploitation of the family was opposed by women as well as men. But the domination of the struggle by labor-aristocratic leaders convinced many male unionists that their jobs were directly threatened by women; they failed to see that capitalism's process of bringing women into new lower paid jobs was an attack on the entire class. Women's employment was seen as the problem, and the traditional family wage was posed as the solution. The struggles also won important working-class gains such as child labor regulations and

other protective labor laws to benefit women.

Thus the family wage was a temporary gain for sections of the class. But it also suited capitalism's needs. Capitalism maintains itself by reinforcing divisions and backwardness within the proletariat. Workers are often forced to accept what the boss wants because "I have to feed my family." Women's family role — above all the inherent conservatism of laboring in isolation rather than collectively — also weakens the ability of the proletariat as a whole to fight the class struggle.

The fact that the family is propertyless is all the more reason it is needed. The male worker is taught to identify with at least one element of bourgeois consciousness, sexism. He doesn't own productive property, but he can imagine that he controls the family funds and is master of the house, even though in reality he is still only a wage slave.

The family as economic unit not only fills the capitalists' fundamental need for the reproduction of labor power, but the family-based division of labor also enables capitalism to keep down the social wage: public services like child care, education and health care. To

ing lower wages or else risk replacement by women workers willing to work for less. Of course, all women are not wives and mothers. But the family rationale — that woman's income is supplementary and optional — is used to keep wages down for all.

DOMESTIC EXPLOITATION?

The relation between women's domestic labor and the system of wage exploitation led to the once-fashionable leftist notion that household labor is exploited like factory labor. But the proletarian wife, in her household role, does not produce value and surplus value — and therefore is not exploited by capital. Nor is she exploited by her husband (although she may be oppressed by him). She is responsible for reproducing the labor-power commodity, but not under conditions directly governed by the law of value. (For example, even if there is an excess of the labor power commodity on the market, she must still work to reproduce her family members' labor power so that they survive.)

What the working-class housewife does is produce use values in the home. But removal from a direct role



Watsonville, CA cannery strike, 1986. Women workers led militant fight against bosses.

the degree that workers accept the myth of the family as a private refuge from their jobs and dealings with their bosses, no matter how bad things really get in reality, they are restrained from making demands on the state for social needs. Whatever needs are not met at home become the failure of the individual family, especially the wife, rather than the bosses.

The direct wage is also reduced. Capitalism fundamentally depends on a reserve army of labor as an important underpinning of the system. Women are used chiefly as part of what Marx defined as the "floating" section of this reserve. Women still must give priority to home and child-care duties and are therefore willing to accept part-time jobs and lower wages. (In the U.S., a quarter of all working women held part-time jobs in 1986 compared with 9 percent of men.) The bosses use the classic divide-and-conquer strategy to lower men's wages as well; men are forced to "compete" by accept-

ing value production in a society where value is the end-all and be-all ensures the subordination of women.

Engels called the position of the proletarian housewife "open or concealed domestic slavery." Like a slave, the domestic laborer is tied to a particular household and family; she cannot move freely about between "employers"; and like chattel slaves in the capitalist era, she is subordinated to the relations between labor power and capital. But unlike a slave, no particular capitalist ruler *directly* provides for her welfare or even appears as her master. Rather she depends on the wage-labor/capital interchange to receive her share of the family wage, an indirect payment from the capitalist class for the maintenance and production of labor power.

Capitalism's exploitation of the wage laborer is all the more insidious because it is concealed under the pretension of the "equal exchange" of wages for labor power. Likewise with the oppression of women: the

“equal exchange of love” as the foundation of a freely chosen marriage conceals the underlying economic compulsion. Of course, the proletarian woman often faces the double burden of wage and domestic labor. Capitalism takes full advantage of the ideology that woman’s “primary” role is in the home to keep down her wages and rights as a worker.

WOMEN’S ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE

In discussing the progressiveness of women’s entry into production, Engels did not address the inequality of wages and conditions, even though job equality is a necessary condition for putting women on an equal footing with men. In modern capitalism the disparity is great. While in the U.S., 60 percent of wives work, much of their work is part-time, interrupted by or geared to family commitments. In 1983, 80 percent of all female employees worked in only 20 of the U.S. Census’s 420 occupational categories, the great bulk of them unskilled and minimally paid. As low-paying and part-time work is the main growth area of the modern economy, women continue to earn only 64 percent of male incomes.⁵ Therefore men’s higher wage forces economic dependency even on women who work.

Women’s lower wages, combined with the fact that wages are based on average, not individual, needs for maintenance and reproduction, means that single-parent families headed by women are disproportionately condemned to poverty. The single woman worker with several kids at home gets the same wage as her married sister — a wage based on the supposedly minimal needs of the latter. And their wage is far less than that of their single or divorced brother *without* children.

Today in the U.S. one in three marriages ends in divorce, and after divorce the woman’s living standard falls on average by 74 percent while the man’s goes up by 49 percent. Thus divorce is the single greatest predictor of poverty for women and children. The persistence of horrors like domestic violence against women and the fact that battered women stay with their husbands is not explained by Engels’ notion that male chauvinism is a leftover from pre-capitalist society; it results from the material conditions of capitalism.

SUPRAHISTORY AND SUPERSTAGISM

In showing how civilization, as opposed to pre-historic society, came to oppress women, Engels wrote:

“The same cause which had ensured to the woman her previous supremacy in the house — that her activity was confined to domestic labor — this same cause now ensured the man’s supremacy in the house. The domestic labor of the woman no longer counted beside the acquisition of the necessities of life by the man; the latter was everything, the former an unimportant extra.”

Engels regarded the division of social life into public and private spheres as key to the devaluation of women. But the sharp distinction that Engels describes became decisively true only under capitalism, when production was moved out of the home — an indication of the greater alienation under capitalism compared to previous class societies. Engels’ reading of capitalist conditions back into precapitalist history is an example of the error of suprahistoricism. The danger of supra-

historicism in general is that it overlooks the particular ways in which *capitalism* oppresses women.

Criticisms of Engels’ *Origin of the Family* run the gamut from superficial to serious. One of the most interesting and provocative writers is the “Marxist feminist” academic Martha Gimenez, who criticizes Engels’ entire work as distorted by his suprahistorical approach. She states:

“It would be impossible to understand the uniqueness of capitalism as a mode of production with its own conditions of emergence and its historical laws of motion and transformation if its ‘origins’ were traced to the earliest historical appearance of propertyless persons working for wages and owners of wealth bent on making profits as merchants or bankers. That would entail the denial of the possibility of qualitative historical change, the transformation of historically specific social classes — capitalists and workers — into ahistorical categories of analysis (e.g. rich and poor or propertied and propertyless) and the universalization of capitalism which, from this ahistorical perspective, becomes either a manifestation of an unchanging human nature or a victory of human reason against the fetters of tradition.

“The same argument is valid when the issue under consideration is sexual inequality. A historical materialist approach would not inquire into the origins of the family or the origins of the oppression of women in a chronological sense, in prehistory or in the origins of ‘civilization’ or class society, but would, instead, investigate the historically specific structures, processes, and contradictions, characterizing the articulation between the two aspects of production within a given mode of production.”⁶

Gimenez is right in saying that Engels, in drawing a broad overview of the family and the oppression of women, fails to examine how these phenomena varied among different class societies. Unfortunately her alternative is a static, pragmatic approach.

It is true that capitalism, like any other mode of production, must be analyzed in and of itself; a chronological order of development can be a terrible guide to understanding how a system works. This was Marx’s view, but he also noted that certain “categories” continued through different historical stages while qualitatively changing. The development of these categories shed light on capitalist political economy in his day.

Commodities, for example, existed in ancient society, despite the absence of capitalist production; they played a qualitatively different role then, but their emergence signified the separation of the product from the producer. Likewise Marx analyzed the fundamental category of “labor” through various class societies up to the present.⁷ The past helps illuminate the present because there is a continuity in history, despite quantitative and qualitative transformations.

It is impossible to understand the direction of the class struggle under capitalism without recognizing that class society as a whole stems from material scarcity, which necessitates the stratification and oppression of social groups. There is a developmental relationship between the qualitatively different historical producing

classes. Slavery, feudalism and capitalism are successive stages in which layers of producers are increasingly alienated from the means of production. To say this is not to be suprahistorical in the sense of looking *over* history; it is rather to look at the motion of phenomena *through* history.

As Gimenez correctly notes, women's oppression is not just a historical legacy; it is specifically molded to serve capitalism. But women have undeniably been oppressed for thousands of years. What is to say that the capitalist mode will not be replaced by another system with its own specific internal drive to oppress women? Unlike Gimenez, Marx and Engels knew that capitalism was not simply a distinct mode of production but the culmination of all alienated and class-ridden society. Authentic socialism can be the negation not just of capitalism but of all class society — because the elimination of scarcity could at last be achieved. The reason the future socialist society is worth fighting for is that it can eliminate the material basis for any type of oppression.

Gimenez' view would not allow us to see the broad dialectical motion of history and the succession of quantitative steps that lead to and interpenetrate with qualitative advances. Her interpretation makes history a catalog of discrete stages. Negation thus becomes erasure, not development.

THE FAMILY AS ECONOMIC UNIT

Gimenez specifically derides Engels' "reliance on descriptive, non-Marxist categories." She disputes his "notion of the family as the 'economic' unit of society, as the molecule of which society is composed" as superficial, "a typical nineteenth-century sociological truism alien to the Marxist problematic."

"Nevertheless, the study of the empirically observable level of social reality is not outside the purview of historical materialism; if Engels is to be criticized on this point, it is because he did not link this 'visible' element of 'society' with its underlying determinants. It is the case that, at the level of social and market relations, the family is an economic unit to the extent that it is an ideologically mystified mechanism that regulates people's access to the means of production, to the means of subsistence, and to the goods and services produced in its context by its members. As long as the family continues to operate as an economic unit, 'society' does not assume responsibility for its members except under limited circumstances; distribution and consumption are organized in ways that presuppose family membership and specific relations between the family and the 'economy' which severely restrict women's lives and opportunities."

Although Engels did not consistently carry out the Marxist analysis of the proletarian family as the economic unit of society, Gimenez' critique offers no alternative on this score. She accepts the family as economic unit only "at the level of social and market relations," not at any fundamental level. This is not simply because of Engels' lack of historical specificity. Gimenez misunderstands the role of the family because she overlooks the underlying historical drive of production, the attempt by human beings to overcome scarcity in qualitatively changing ways. Production in conditions

of scarcity means that *exploitation* is the determinant within each given social system. So the key to the family under capitalism is its specific relation to exploitation.

Gimenez doesn't see exploitation as central and therefore doesn't examine the economic role of the family at that level. At a secondary level she does recognize its economic role: it regulates "access" to the means of production, but its basic structural function is to serve as a cover for society's failure to assume responsibility for distribution and consumption. Central to her conception is that the family is an economic unit only to the extent that it is an "ideologically mystified mechanism" designed for this function of concealment. However, the *ideological* mystification of the family is indeed the surface. If Gimenez' understanding allowed her to probe the family to its actual fundamental level, she would see that ideological mystification stems from the *real* mystification, the fetishism of commodities inherent in capitalist exploitation.

THE EPOCHAL CHANGE

The need for historical specificity is not confined to the distinction between modes of production. One of the most disorienting analytical problems is the failure to differentiate between the progressive and decadent epochs of capitalism. Engels believed that the proletarianization of women would rapidly undermine the proletarian family, as we have noted. The reason for this mistake was Marx and Engels' revolutionary optimism. They expected that the progressive epoch of capitalism would be followed more or less directly by socialist revolution; the reactionary epoch would be short-lived. It was no accident that Engels failed to draw out the full contradiction between capitalism's progressive tendency to socialize the workforce and its need to erect barriers for defense against an increasingly threatening working class. A deeper analysis of capitalism's development into its epoch of decay was only elaborated years afterward by Lenin.

It is important to correct illusions in capitalism's capacity for progress. In reality capitalism has shown itself able to take reactionary forms and ideas from the past and remold them to suit its own needs. All the more so in the case of women's oppression, which suits an array of objective (and ideological) needs of the system. Engels' overoptimistic estimate unwittingly overlaps with the reformist views of bourgeois feminists who say that sexism is outdated, illogical and morally repugnant and that capitalism should get rid of it.

The epochal transformation of capitalism is crucial to a corrective understanding of Engels' *The Origin*. But if Engels overestimated the pace of the disintegration of the family, he could never have conceived of its abolition *under capitalism*. The wonder is that there are those who actually live in this reactionary epoch who nevertheless think it possible.

CAPITALISM WITHOUT THE FAMILY?

The British SWP theorist Chris Harman, for one, raises the question of capitalism doing away with the family. He says, "there can be no end to women's oppression without an end to privatized reproduction. But that, in turn, is not possible without a complete revolutionizing of social relations. This is only possible in two

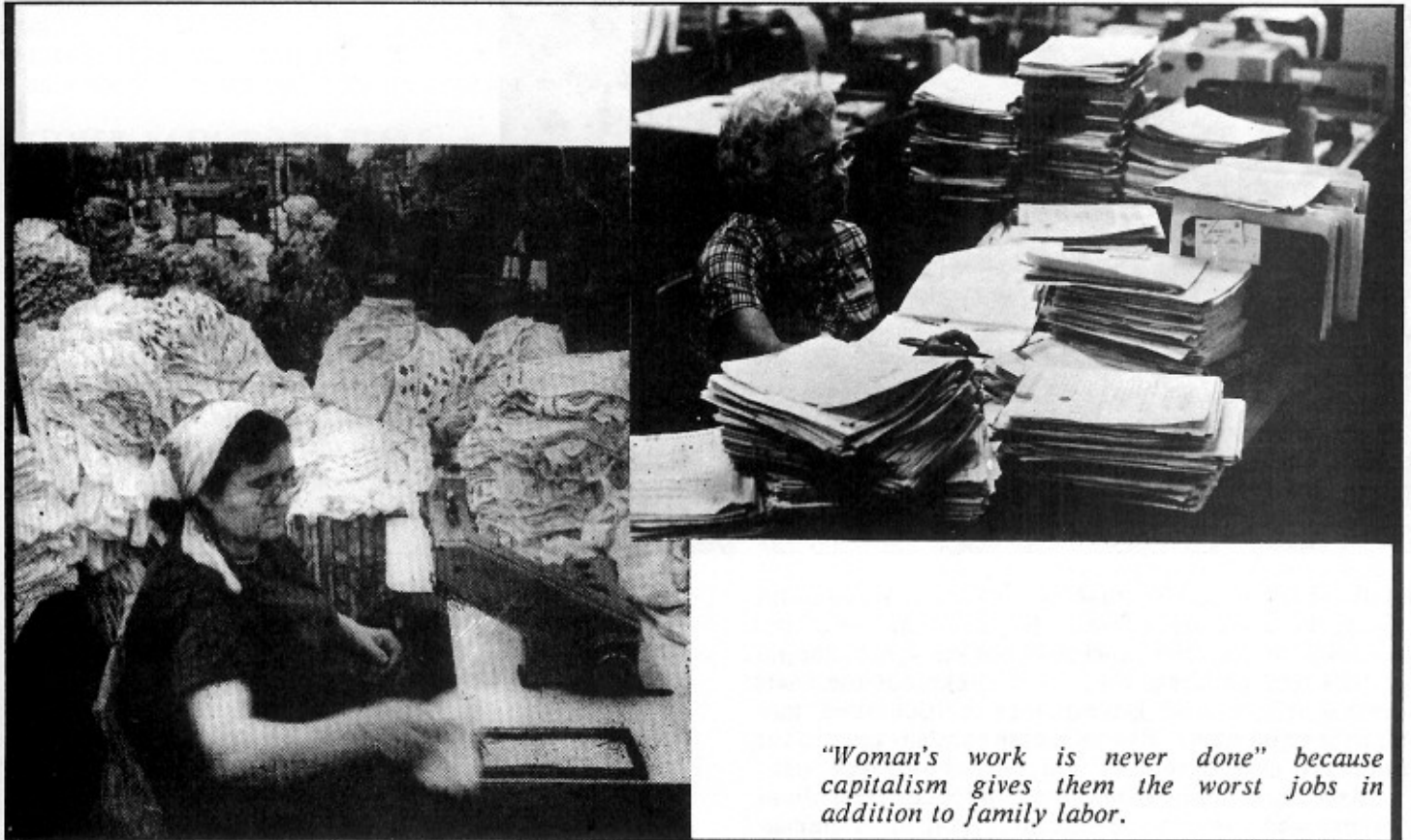
circumstances." One is socialism, naturally; the other:

"If capitalism were able to enter into a new period of virtually uninterrupted expansion of the productive forces, the system could then replace privatized reproduction with socialized, mechanized housework and even the building of Brave New World type baby farms, etc."⁸

Harman does admit that "the full socialization of child care would require a level of investment which the capitalist system is loath to make, even in periods of expansion," much less in a deepening crisis. Nevertheless, assuming an accountant's rationalism, he calculates that since the average mother has two children and an average nursery has one adult for six children, it would be more economical for the system to exploit women than to maintain them in domestic isolation.

capitalism would free women from domestic labor ignores another feature of the epoch of decay: capitalism can expand for some population layers in the imperialist countries only at the expense of other sectors, through a deepened exploitation of the "third world" and, undoubtedly, through major defeats of the working classes at home as well. This happened in the World War 2 period to set the stage for the postwar boom. But even then most women (especially on the world scale) never had paying jobs but performed unpaid labor in the home. They continued to live in neocolonial countries; their basic goal was to avoid starvation and reach subsistence.

Underneath, Harman denies the nature of capitalism's epoch of decay: it tends to socialize production relations but is also forced to put countertendencies into operation. In reality it would be *irrational* for capitalism



"Woman's work is never done" because capitalism gives them the worst jobs in addition to family labor.

"From the point of view of aging capitalism, a woman stuck in the home caring for only two children and her husband is a waste of potential surplus value. The fact that she labors all day is no consolation for the system, her labor is labor that could be done more efficiently, relieving her for wage slavery."

Thus Harman argues that the socialization of child care is both rational and theoretically possible under capitalism (if not practically for now). What he overlooks is that such a major step toward socializing the workforce by releasing women from family demands is impossible because of the real needs of capitalist economics in this epoch. The system is devoted to preserving itself by offsetting its inherent socializing drives, not by carrying them out.

Harman's argument that an (unlikely) expansion of

to break down a division within the working class that has served it so well and that it has done so much to exacerbate. Harman's notion opens the door to a reformist road for women's liberation.

GENERATIONAL VS. DAILY REPLACEMENT

Another attempt to challenge the family as the source of women's oppression under capitalism is that of the Marxist theorist Lise Vogel. Families, she writes, "are not ... the only places where workers renew themselves on a daily basis. For example, many workers in South Africa live in barracks near their work, and are permitted to visit their families in outlying areas once a year. Furthermore, children do not necessarily constitute a family's only contribution to the replenishment of society's labor power. Other family members may at times enter

the work force, at harvest, for instance, or during economic crises. Finally, families are not the only source of such replenishment; other possibilities ... include migration and enslavement of foreign populations. These observations demonstrate that the identification of the family as the sole site of maintenance of labor power overstates its role at the level of immediate production."⁹

Vogel's argument, however, does not disprove the centrality of the family in daily as well as generational reproduction; it only shows that traditional family roles can sometimes be replaced or altered. In fact South Africa is the exception that proves the rule. While not

of subsistence to women during the childbearing period, and not the sex division of labor in itself, that forms the material basis for women's subordination in class society." Even where, as in South Africa, the state has taken over the women's role in the *daily* regeneration of the laborer, no capitalist state removes from women the burden of bearing and raising the *next* generation.

Obviously women are biologically essential for the generational replacement of the labor force, and that in itself would imply some special need for control by the capitalist class. But it is also crucial that women and the family, rather than the capitalists, bear the burden of the daily regeneration of labor power.



The LRP marched in the April 9 Washington demonstration in defense of women's rights under capitalism. As Marx said, communists never hide their program.

totally absent in the South African situation Vogel describes, the proletarian family has a tenuous existence. The wage of the male worker is not enough to support his wife and children; they have to eke out the barest survival off the land. But when he is discharged, temporarily or permanently, he is cast back into the family unit. Thus even here the family has not disappeared.

Exploitation under apartheid depends on policing workers who live in slave-like conditions; it is the basis for South Africa's super-profits but is not a stable form of capitalism. Vogel's contention is equivalent to saying that capitalism doesn't require unemployment because Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia did without it. But these too were exceptions, and in the case of the USSR (even more rapidly in other Stalinist states), we can see today that unemployment is resurgent. It *is* a necessity, even if not always present at a given historical moment. Vogel is engaging in a "pure form" argument, always an injustice to the richness of Marxist analysis.

The other exceptions Vogel lists are likewise precisely that — exceptions; they do not make the family's central role in the maintenance of labor power any less.

As an alternative to the division of labor carried out through the family, Vogel holds that it is specifically *generational*, not daily, replacement of labor power for which women are indispensable and which determines their oppression. "It is the provision by men of means

Harman and Vogel, from different directions, miss the Marxist analysis of the family's central role as the economic unit of society in the epoch of decay. Engels at least had an excuse: he lived in the last century.

CRISIS INTENSIFIES ATTACKS

As capitalism heads toward mounting unemployment and broader social crisis, the prospect for women is much grimmer than described so far. By now the family wage can no longer be said to exist, not even for the middle class: compare the 60 percent of wives in the U.S. labor force in 1985 with the 25 percent in 1950. As well, while capitalism may conveniently claim to be sending women back to the home, layers of working-class women in this category really suffer from disguised unemployment: the lack of a real family wage means that they still need work and therefore are part of the reserve army of labor.

The number of involuntary part-time workers increased by 60 percent between 1979 and 1985. As union-scale industrial jobs held mainly by men diminished, women entered the labor force to fill part-time and low-wage service jobs. (While women are 45 percent of the labor force, they are 64 percent of minimum-wage earners.) For this reason women account for 63 percent of the increase in the U.S. workforce in the past decade. Nevertheless, the increasing *proportion* of

female labor will inevitably be used by capitalism as a convenient excuse for the disappearance of the better-paid jobs that many male workers held in the past.

The social wage must also be reduced much more drastically because capitalism's need for austerity is growing. We have seen wholesale cuts in health care, housing, education and all public services. If the system can keep mothers believing in their responsibility for the health and welfare of husbands and children (while it is the father's job to bring home the bacon), it will create an important counter to the persistent notion that it is society's duty to supply such services.

Today the female-headed single-parent household is the most rapidly growing family form, not only in the U.S. but worldwide. The number of single mothers in the U.S. doubled from 1960 to 1985, when one out of every four mothers in the work force headed her own family. The breakup of the nuclear family under capitalism has meant smaller family units and more responsibility on the woman's shoulders.

MOTHER, FATHER AND STATE

It is also a problem for capitalism that the "ideal" nuclear family so rarely exists, having been torn asunder by capitalist relations. The capitalist state has tried to fill in, buttressing the family where it can and also substituting for some of its previous patriarchal roles. (For example, the state has created institutions to combat juvenile delinquency and spends enormous amounts trying to prevent teen pregnancy.) In advanced countries the trend is for the state to reconstitute the family, create foster families, etc., rather than institutionalize the poor as it did in its early years. And whatever the inadequacies of the real family, capitalism's contradictions force it to upgrade the "family" as an ideological tool nevertheless. (On this see "Porn, Feminism and the Meese Report," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 27.)

Engels underestimated the role the state would come to play in working-class relations and a more continual process of transformation of the working class family. As *The Communist Manifesto* states:

"The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois ones. ... All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned."

Likewise capitalism not only remolded the family of previous class society but is constantly recasting it to suit its needs. No matter what changes the capitalist family undergoes, capitalism's dependence on it and on women's subordination remains.

The significance of the family for social control is not limited to the devastating gender divisions it sustains. It breaks down the working class into supposedly independent cells. Marx understood that capitalist alienation means not only the separation of the producer from his/her product but the conversion of human labor into the commodity labor power — making people into

appendages of machines. Capitalism's family structure intensifies alienation. In a sense, the family "petty-bourgeoisifies" the entire working class: each worker is seen as the competitor of all others, and the preservation of one's own children, home, etc. is one's highest goal. The family is the group that, whatever its problems, one identifies with from birth. Family ties are the ties that bind.

A return to the family, objectively and ideologically, accompanied the reversal of women's gains that was an important part of the Stalinist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. The atomizing and conservatizing function of the family has generally been adopted by the stratified capitalist countries (including supposedly revolutionary Cuba and China) — as well as by fascist Germany — in order to contain the class struggle.

The development of the productive forces in capitalism's progressive era afforded humanity for the first time the opportunity to overcome scarcity — and thereby to transcend its division into warring classes. Yet today, contrary to Engels' optimism, the human race is divided against itself to a degree never before seen. Leon Trotsky observed in speech in 1925:

"The development of the productive forces is not needed for its own sake. In the last analysis the development of the productive forces is needed because it provides the basis for a new human personality, conscious, without a lord over him on earth ... a human personality which absorbs into itself all the best of what was created by thought and creativity of past ages, which in solidarity with all others goes forward, creates new cultural values, constructs new personal and family attitudes, higher and nobler than those which were born on the basis of class slavery. The development of the productive forces is dear to us, as the material presupposition of a higher human personality, not shut up in itself, but cooperative, associative."

"From this point of view it may be said that probably for many decades to come it will be possible to evaluate a human society by the attitude it has toward woman ... and this is true not only for evaluating society, but also the individual person."

To win these goals, it is necessary to build a revolutionary party to fight against bourgeois and middle-class feminism — and all the more against reformism disguised as Marxism. The best elements will use the tools of Marxism to develop the program for women's liberation that is so urgently needed.■

NOTES

1. Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, Chapter 2.
2. "Monogamy" refers to the family form in which a woman and her children are dependent on an individual man, not a clan or a wider social group.
3. Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, Chapter 6.
4. Marx, *Wage Labor and Capital*.
5. These and subsequent employment figures are from the report of the National Commission on Working Women, 1985.
6. Martha Gimenez, "Marxist and Non-Marxist Elements in Engels' Views on the Oppression of Women," in *Engels Revisited*, ed. by Sayers, Evans and Redclift (1987).
7. See "The Method of Political Economy" in Marx's *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* (1857).
8. *International Socialism* No. 23 (1984). The "Brave New World" reference is to Aldous Huxley's futuristic novel of a society where babies are born in laboratories to planned specifications.
9. Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* (1983), p. 141.

CUNY: A Working-Class Victory

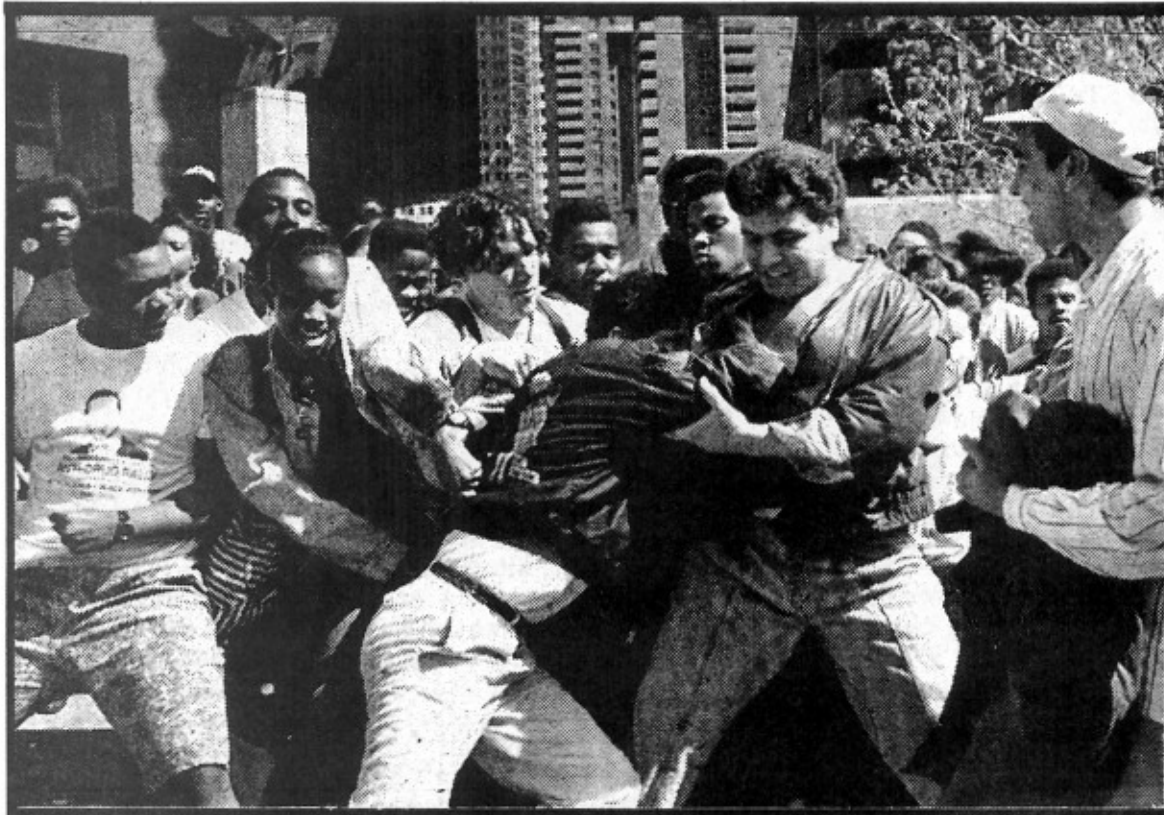
A small but significant victory was won by the students of the City University of New York (CUNY) in May. After a month of protest and two weeks of militant building occupations and mass demonstrations, New York State Governor Mario Cuomo was forced to veto the tuition hike he had previously agreed to and to promise no further budget cuts. These attacks had been part of a deal with the legislature to cut taxes for the rich and balance the state budget at the expense of the working class.

The key to the victory was a day-long march of ten thousand students and staff members on May 2nd, from Wall Street to a Democratic Party dinner at a posh midtown hotel, where Cuomo was scheduled to be the honored guest. Cuomo backed out of the dinner igno-

the working class to take a beating again.

CUNY suffered huge losses in 1975-76 when the city went bankrupt. As a peace offering to the bankers, tuition was imposed for the first time — not accidentally, just when black and Latino enrollment reached significant numbers. Enrollment was reduced from 250,000 to 170,000 in 1980 (it is now 190,000); minority students fell by 50 percent. Much of the non-teaching staff, was decimated. And the university practically stopped hiring full-time faculty; they were replaced by part-timers with little security and no benefits.

Why these attacks? Despite all the prestigious governmental and bourgeois reports stressing the need for better higher education, with the economy heading downward the capitalists figure they can't afford to



CUNY protesters at Manhattan Community College block hostile student from entering building during takeover. Only handfuls opposed the widely supported action.

miniously, and then denied that his veto had anything to do with the student movement. This man has a glorious career ahead as a paid liar for the bourgeoisie.

THE CRISIS AND THE WORKING CLASS

The protest against educational cutbacks was inspired by earlier student movements at CUNY in the 1960s and '70s. In fact the situation in 1989 is worse than in the notorious crisis of 1976, when severe cutbacks in all public services were blamed on the city's financial generosity to its working-class citizens. Now, after the Carter and Reagan years, the New York City treatment has been given to the whole country. As a new economic crisis looms, as the huge third-world and national debt bubbles get closer to bursting, the word from Wall Street and Washington, from Republicans and Democrats alike, is "austerity." Translation: it's time for

have too many educated workers. But they do need more cheap labor, and they surely don't want masses of working people trained to think for themselves. So they funnel funds to the elite private schools and plan to "restructure" CUNY.

In 1975-76 the city workers lost the battle against an earlier round of austerity, despite resistance. The reason was that the union officials kept the workers divided; there were strikes, but they were isolated. Union bureaucrats laughed at the idea of a general strike — even though Mayor Koch fearfully called it a "nuclear weapon." And it is. The potential of a united, militant working-class response is limitless. A general strike against cutbacks and concessions is the action that can stop the capitalists' attacks.

The revived student movement in New York was self-consciously proletarian. Student leaders repeatedly

spoke of their base as made up of "people of color and the working class." Their open mass fight against cutbacks in public services was widely popular — and contrasted sharply with the abject capitulations of the municipal unions. For this reason, despite the activists' seizures of school property, they were handled warily by the media, college administrations and (for the most part) even the police.

A COLLEGE EDUCATION IN POLITICS

An important lesson in politics should be learned. Despite their mass support, the students were treated with contempt by politicians of all stripes. Cuomo lied repeatedly about his dedication to hold back tuition and refused to talk to student demonstrators. None of the candidates for Mayor of New York, including the black social democrat David Dinkins, deigned to issue a statement of support for the students' demands. Not one member of the Democratic-controlled state Assembly voted against the budget deal.

The reason was that the politicians, not excluding the liberal Democrats, are all pro-capitalist. Those who are aiming for higher office like Cuomo and Dinkins need to prove their "responsibility" to the Wall Street and real estate capitalists who finance big-time campaigns. Others, even the handful of liberals who *voiced* support for the students, refused to take any *action* to challenge those who stood openly in opposition.

Another lesson is about the limitations of student movements. Students are not a class, even those who belong to the proletariat because of their family origins or their own labor. Their status is a temporary one, and gains won at one moment are easily taken away — especially in times of capitalist austerity, as in New York today. A lasting victory requires that the organized workers of New York enter onto the political stage in their own right.

THE CITY COLLEGE MOVEMENT

The movement originated at City College (CCNY), the oldest of the CUNY campuses and a traditional center of student politics since the 1930s. A section of student government members took the lead in organizing demonstrations at Cuomo's offices in Albany and downtown New York. There was also a disruptive march at an academic ceremony honoring Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos, originally a Reagan appointee and therefore a spokesman for educational austerity. Lastly, this group, later calling itself the Students for Educational Rights (SER), engineered the first building takeover, the action that triggered the spread of the struggle to CUNY's dozen-and-a-half other campuses.

CCNY is also the campus where the LRP was active in the movement, since several of our supporters are workers and students there. During the struggle we spoke at rallies, participated in all actions — and issued five leaflets and a summary Bulletin. (Copies are available free to interested readers.)

In evaluating the results of the movement, serious problems have to be addressed. While 10,000 marched at the culminating demonstration and thousands of students on each campus solidarized with the main demands, only hundreds joined the campus rallies, and at some colleges many fewer took part in the direct actions

and strategic decisions. Unity was dangerously thin.

At CCNY, one reason was the low frequency of mass actions. Aside from a march through the neighboring West Harlem community and the May 2 CUNY-wide outpouring a whole week later, there was no opportunity for activity by supporters who could not commit themselves to 24-hour duty. The SER seemed not to understand that the key to success was mass participation, not individual heroism.

As well, there was lack of clarity from the leadership. For the first week of the building takeover, most students did not know what to do. The daily leaflets issued by the SER did not call for a strike or a boycott of classes; yet speakers at the permanent microphone, as well as groups marching through classroom buildings, denounced other students for going to class.

A necessary tactic to spread and unify the movement would have been to call a mass meeting to discuss the issues and plan actions — and to propose a one-day student strike. That would have allowed supporters to speak to the confused sympathetic students and shut the school down through numbers, persuasion and mass picket-line power — not classroom lock-jamming and other petty acts of harassment.

This is what the LRP advocated in leaflets and discussions. Such a strategy was carried out the morning of May 2, when LRP supporters were instrumental in organizing pickets for the strike called only the day before. (Much credit also goes to architecture students who spent the night making industrial-strength placards and picket signs.) The picket lines grew and the strike was successful that day. This was one of the few initiatives taken by students not directly involved in the building takeover. Many people felt it was *their* strike.

FOR A STUDENT UNION

To continue this kind of momentum, now that the first battle is over, an on-going student organization should be formed. Not an outfit like the university student senate, a stepping stone for would-be politicians; nor a lobbying group like NYPIRG, which sees voting for unfriendly candidates as the main route forward. Students need a mass-based organization that defends their working-class interests: a student union.

In addition to working for student needs, a student union would also help militant workers maintain pressure in the labor unions against the reformist leaders' perennial sellouts. There is a new mood rising among the working class against concessions. The chances for building a new fighting leadership are growing. A militant, mass democratic student union would be a beacon for our fellow workers as well as an ally in creating a new militant leadership for the labor movement.

Unfortunately, initial signs indicate that the SER has very different plans. They hope to get college funding for their ongoing organization, a step that would inevitably compromise their independence from the administration. And they have made no effort to carry the momentum of the spring struggle into building a *mass* organization of students.

IN THE UNIONS

LRPers were also active in supporting the struggle in the unions, on campus and off. In Local 384 of

AFSCME's District Council 37, our supporters were decisive in getting a motion passed to organize a union committee against the threatened layoffs. On May Day, the international workers' holiday, the Committee issued a statement that said in part:

"We reject every attempt on the part of management to pit students against workers. We categorically opposed the tuition increase as a way of paying workers' salaries. Any attempt at raising tuition would result in the eventual loss of jobs.

"Therefore, in order to obtain fuller participation of all workers and students, we propose that the Students for Educational Rights organize a mass meeting to discuss ways forward for the immediate struggle."

At a subsequent meeting reluctantly called by the chapter leadership at the demand of the Committee, the members unanimously endorsed a resolution submitted by the Committee. This called on Local 384 to ask DC 37 as a whole to support the students' actions, to oppose

tuition hikes and budget cuts, and to organize demonstrations for this program at Governor Cuomo's office.

Another resolution, introduced by an LRP supporter, was passed unanimously by the Guild Delegate Assembly of Local 1199, the hospital workers' union, on April 27:

"That the Guild Delegate Assembly request that the 1199 Executive Council issue a public statement of support for and solidarity with the CUNY students in their actions to fight the budget cuts and tuition hikes, and their demand to meet with Governor Cuomo, in recognition of the fact that their struggle and our struggle are the same."

Needless to say, the willingness to fight shown by the members of DC 37 and Local 1199 was not matched by their union leaders. To continue the struggle, the complacent and narrow-minded union bureaucrats must be replaced by genuine working-class militants: a revolutionary leadership that has no commitment to preserving capitalism.■

Let's Win the Eastern Strike!

We reprint, slightly edited, a leaflet issued by the LRP during the early stages of the Eastern strike.

The struggle has since taken a turn for the worse. Hope that it would be a milestone in the fight against concessions has given way to demoralization over the unions' failure to defend workers' interests. Union leaders never seriously attempted to win with mass picket lines. Their threat to call out rail workers was a bluff aimed at getting Bush and Congress to intervene. A tremendous opportunity to beat back concessions was wasted. Lorenzo couldn't break the unions, but the courts are slowly smothering the workers.

The lesson is clear. It's time for the working class to break its ties with the capitalist bosses, state and courts. That means building the revolutionary party and relying on workers' power to shut down capitalism.

All across the country workers are closely following the strike against Eastern Airlines. The dedication and willingness to sacrifice displayed by the striking machinists, flight attendants and pilots is a reminder that in working-class solidarity there is tremendous strength. In standing up to Frank Lorenzo and the capitalist bosses, Eastern's workers have put themselves in the forefront of the struggle against concessions, strike-breaking and all the attacks against the working class.

Eastern workers face what all workers face: more and more concessions, two-tier wage systems, speed-up, worsening job conditions and layoffs. And we all know that if management has its way, the situation will get far worse. Since PATCO, many workers understand that the very existence of the unions is threatened.

That is why when Eastern workers went out, workers from other airlines rushed to their support. Railroad workers looked forward to IAM picket lines so they could honor them. Workers understand that a victory at Eastern could signal a turnaround for all labor — and end the long downward slide that has seen strikes

isolated and stabbed in the back by union leaders.

Lorenzo provoked the strike by demanding an average 28 percent wage cut, with even greater cuts for future employees. There is no doubt that he wanted to break the union, as he did at Continental, and turn Eastern into a similar low-wage plantation.

THE BOSSES' LAW

He counted on the capitalist government to help, and it did. While President Bush gave Lorenzo a free hand to break the strike, the workers' hands were tied by restraining orders and injunctions. The capitalist judges ruled that rail workers could not honor IAM picket lines, although such action is legal. And if the courts had allowed workers to spread the strike, Congress — Democrats and Republicans alike — said they would rewrite the law.

Workers should draw lessons from this latest experience with the bosses' law. If the law favors the bosses, we are supposed to obey. If by accident the law favors the workers, the bosses ignore their own laws or simply change them. Heads they win, tails we lose.

It is suicide to play by the bosses' rules, especially when they can change them whenever it suits their interests. Remember, Reagan smashed PATCO in the name of the law, and the AFL-CIO did nothing to stop him. Now the union leaders from Lane Kirkland to Charles Bryan undermine the strike by telling workers to accept this stacked deck. IAM head William Winpisinger even said he would not send out pickets where it was still legal!

THE BOSSES' BUREAUCRATS

The bureaucrats are hiding behind the law, using it as a pretext for not fighting the capitalists. They conveniently forget that the unions were built in the first place by massive defiance of the bosses' anti-labor laws.

The problem is not just the law but the bureaucrats' strategy of compromise and concessions. Their goal in the Eastern strike is not to roll back the attack but to

pursue several strategies, all involving more concessions. Whether you bring in a government mediator or another capitalist boss like Carl Icahn (since when is this strikebreaker a "friend of labor"?), the workers are going to get hit with more givebacks.

When Lorenzo saw that the strike was a success and Eastern was virtually shut down, he turned to the bankruptcy courts to bail him out. In response, the union leadership is spreading illusions that these courts can be used to the unions' advantage.

HOW THE STRIKE CAN WIN

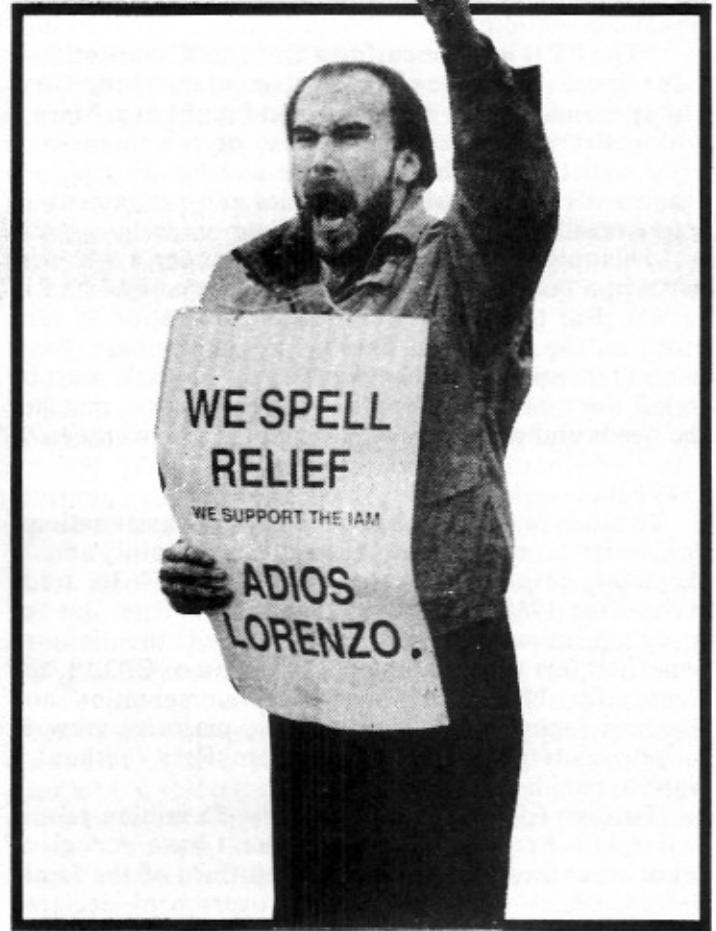
Prayerful hopes for other corporate bosses, reliance on the capitalists' government, willingness to make greater concessions and failure to spread the strike all show that the labor bureaucrats are as frightened as the bosses that the workers will get out of hand. The militancy of the strike is being sapped by the defeatist strategy of the union leadership. There must be a new strategy if the strike is to win.

First, IAM workers must organize and fight for mass picket lines at Eastern. Strike committees must be formed and pickets organized to keep scabs out and develop control over the strike by the most militant fighters. Workers must shut the shuttle! In New York, Boston and Washington, mass picketing must stop the Eastern shuttle. Its operation is a shot in the arm for Lorenzo, and it says to scabs and consumers that it's OK to cross picket lines. No way!

Next, the airline unions must do what they should have done in the first place: shut the airports! The consumer boycott of Continental isn't working. The only way to shut down non-union Continental is to shut down the airports altogether. All airline workers' futures are tied to the fortunes of the Eastern strike. No more concessions, no more layoffs. All out to win the strike!

It's time to draw the line against concessions and the attacks on the working class. We cannot allow the bosses and bureaucrats to keep us divided. A general strike of

all workers against the bosses and their government is needed. It is the working class that makes society run, not the capitalist bosses. If we strike together, we have the power to turn things around. Let us see to it that the Eastern strike stands for the beginning of an all-out fightback against the capitalist onslaught that threatens to strangle us. ■



These reformist policies are hard enough to provide in the United States or Western Europe — they are even more impossible in Brazil, a country oppressed by imperialism. This was driven home shortly after Erundina's inauguration as mayor, when the bus fare was increased to twice its pre-election level.

A MIDDLE-CLASS TONE

The tone of the PT's electoral propaganda seemed to aim at a middle-class, not a working-class, audience. The emphasis on cleanliness is meant to counter outgoing mayor (and former President) Janio Quadros' cleanliness campaign. The bus stops are littered with posters proclaiming his exhortations: "Love your city, respect it." "Always keep the sidewalks clean." "It's time to work." Quadros spent much of his administration's energy and resources on the prettification of bourgeois neighborhoods within the city, including the destruction of many *favelas* (shantytowns) and the forced dispersal of their residents.

The PT doesn't share all of Quadros' views. Before her campaign Erundina participated in some occupa-

Brazil

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could elect a woman mayor, a northeasterner, and one with this face." She termed the PT's platform socialist but added: "realistically I know that the conditions for socialism do not exist in Sao Paulo today. Our administration will be democratic, popular and competent."

As *Isto E*, the "Time magazine of Brazil," reported in a post-election profile: "The PTers are more worried about scandalizing the bourgeoisie than the PT." Sadly, that does seem to be the case. In a PT campaign leaflet we read:

"The PT is going to invest in mass transit, shrink the amount of cars downtown, improve transportation, reduce pollution and the bus fares. Its going to cut the time workers spend on the bus. ... We want a clean pretty city without pollution. We also want, most importantly, that the workers that make up this city will enjoy its benefits."

tions of vacant lands by the city's many homeless. However, it seems strange that in a period when the minimum wage for workers is less than \$40 a month, allowing them to hardly pay for the bus much less a car, that the Workers' Party would propagandize for less auto traffic and filling a "cleanliness" gap.

The PT's major thrust at this time was well summed up by one of its delegates to Brazil's recent constitutional convention:

"The PT is not presenting a Socialist Constitution for Brazil. It developed a parliamentary tactic for propagandizing for socialism, but fought to achieve objective and possible victories, at the moment, through the search for support and building alliances with progressive tendencies and parliamentarians on specific points."

This might be a defensive program for a workers' party in a period when the class is disorganized and in retreat. But today, the question of revolution is very much on the agenda in Brazil. And in any case, for a party that seeks to lead the workers the key role must be to tell the truth and formulate a strategy that matches the needs and militancy of the majority of workers.

POVERTY and CLASS

Brazil is one of the world's great industrial nations, despite its dependence on imperialism; certainly among the most developed in the "third world." Its trade surplus for 1988 will exceed 15 billion dollars. But the so-called miracle which industrialized the country benefited less than 30% of the population. CIDAS, the Center for Union Information, Documentation and Analysis reports that "the immense majority grew in misery: undernourished, landless, roofless, without a right to health or education."

Further: 65% of the population — 85 million people — live in poverty, meaning they don't have enough to eat or what they have is not good. A third of the families in Brazil don't make the government-declared minimum wage of \$40 a month — in the especially hard hit Northeast it is more than half of the families. But the difference is not solely a matter of statistics. It is estimated that \$241 would be a decent survival wage. 25 million people are effectively homeless, living in communities of ramshackle homes constructed from discarded pieces of cardboard, scrap metal, rubber tires and whatever else fills in the cracks. Half the country's population is without electricity, 71% are without indoor plumbing, and 85% have no adequate water supply.

Yet there are parts of the country where many live exceedingly well. The tremendous shopping centers of the main cities are more luxurious than their counterparts in the United States. Domestic servants are hired by families who would be considered lower middle class in North America. Cars are plentiful, food is overabundant. Everything that is produced domestically, and almost everything is, is affordable and of high quality — that is if you are middle class or above. In 1988 the bus cost 130 cruzeiros each trip or 13% of the minimum wage for a month of transport. A cup of Brazilian coffee cost about the same. The contrasts between middle class and poor are more striking than the contrast between rich and poor in the United States. Of course, the middle class is much smaller in Brazil.

THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT

Under such conditions it is not surprising that the workers and peasants have engaged in active struggle. During the 1890s and the early part of this century there was a large labor movement; former U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles felt it important enough to write a long work on the subject.

In 1938 the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) led by Carlos Prestes attempted to seize power by insurrection against the Peron-style leader Getulio Vargas. It was unsuccessful, and the big landowners, long suspicious of Vargas and his bourgeois support, turned to him as a savior. Vargas ruled as a dictator with his own brand of national "socialism." He crushed all parties except his own, imprisoned and exiled communists and workers and allowed only a token opposition (the MDB, the predecessor of today's ruling party, the PMDB).

Vargas also initiated an impressive industrial program, opening and administering hundreds of state-owned operations such as power plants and steel mills. With the end of the war, Vargas lost some support because of his admiration for Hitler; eventually he resigned office by committing suicide.

The PCB resumed operation and though illegal, led a strike of 300,000 workers in Sao Paulo in 1953. It came to a compromise with Vargas' PTB at that time and thus started its thirty-year-long practice of supporting the ruling party in a more or less open manner — as long as its labor federation, the CGT, is thrown a few sops.

Mass unrest among the landless peasants and the workers in the early sixties was one of the main reasons for the US-supported military coup of 1964. Under the armed forces many workers were imprisoned, exiled, tortured and killed. Some workers tied to the PCB were influenced by Fidel Castro, while others broke away to form the Maoist Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB).

The Church, as the one legal mass organization capable of opposition, also attracted elements of the working class, especially through the network of base committees which later played an important role in building the PT. It wasn't until 1974, however, that the working class started once more to agitate in its own right and bypass the outright collaboration of the "left."

STRIKE MOVEMENT INTENSIFIES

Isolated strikes, primarily centered in the heavy-industrialized ABC area of Sao Paulo state, reached a crest of activity in the late seventies. One million workers fought the bosses in 1978, two and a half million in 1979. The effects of this strike wave were massive and twofold, leading to the formation of the Workers' Party and a second labor federation, the CUT. Striking metalworkers from ABC like Lula played an important role in the strike wave and in the PT's formation in 1980, when the isolated nature of the struggle became clear. They joined with a number of "Trotskyist" and other socialistic groups to build the PT.

Small at first, the PT and the recent workers' movement have grown quickly. Since 1978, the domination of the PCB and the "Pelegos" has steadily weakened. The latter refers to the type of police-agent union leader exemplified by Zubatov in Czarist Russia. These overt misleaders are numerous in Brazil and still are a

potent force. Some have strong ties to the CIA and the AFL-CIO. One of them, Luis Antonio Medeiros, is popular with the bourgeoisie and propounds his supposedly non-political "syndicalism of results."

THE RECENT STRIKE WAVE

In 1984-1985 the struggle began to overcome its isolation. The CUT was instrumental in tying together various strikes by public workers throughout the vast nation of Brazil. Dutra, a bank worker and prominent leader in the 1984 strike, described the change:

"The first step in that direction was the bank workers strike. Organized on a national level, the strike involved almost the entire category, lessening demonstrably the maneuvering room of the bosses and their government. It represented a fundamental



Sao Paulo's PT mayor Erundina now champions "cleanliness." Once she championed the poor.

leap in the quality of the struggles developed until then by the workers."

1984 saw more than three million workers strike on a national basis. In 1985, the figure rose to five and a half million. It is important to realize that the vaunted *abertura*, or democratic opening, was brought about by the inability of the military to cope with the capitalist crisis and the subsequent rising struggle of the workers, not the gradual enlightenment of the bourgeoisie and the IMF.

Increased borrowing and the indexing of wages to inflation bought the military a short respite, but the movement resumed in 1988 with a vengeance. Under heavy pressure by the IMF and other first world creditors to repay its tremendous external debt, the Sarney government announced wage freezes in the beginning of the year.

It also announced plans to begin dismantling the state-owned industry system begun by Vargas. If successful, this course will prove a boon to the bourgeoisie. It would allow the conversion of a portion of foreign debt into outright ownership of key industries where the workers are best organized and most militant. Of course, this is to be done in the name of cutting the state budget and increasing efficiency.

These proposals brought a swift response by workers. The strongest movements were in the banks, oil refineries, steel plants and transport. In the first half of

1988 alone, four and a half million workers went on strike. In November, workers at the state-owned Oil monopoly Petrobras struck for four weeks at nine locations in as many states. In Cubatao, an industrial center, workers were in permanent assembly for more than a month. It was the fiercest strike in more than twenty years in this sector and brought numerous threats by Sarney to unleash the army.

THE BATTLE OF STEEL

That this was no idle threat was proved by events at the big national steel mill at Volta Redonda in Rio state. The workers occupied the plant on November 7 according to a decision made at a meeting a few days earlier attended by almost ten thousand workers. By its conclusion three workers had been killed and dozens wounded including a six-year-old child.

A local judge ordered the military police in, yet the workers easily repelled them. The military then sent in troops, as it had done against other occupations. The workers foresaw this and resisted for the first time. "This is turning into a humiliation," said the acting president of the local union, Marcelo Felicio.

The 22nd Motorized Infantry Division, the "steel division," arrived the second day of the strike. Two thousand heavily armed troops confronted the workers. Their first attempt to enter the plant was rebuffed. A union leader was arrested and then freed; he attempted to meet with the commanding general, who refused all negotiation. That night the army attacked again with tear gas, bayonets and rubber bullets.

Perceiving that the army was massing to attack the workers and others in the front of the plant, workers from other plants started a diversionary maneuver to distract the soldiers. The police, reinforcing the troops, spread violence indiscriminately into the surrounding streets and beat even people in local bars. Inside the plant the workers resisted the attack armed with stones, sticks and iron bars. They hurled lime at the soldiers and burned a few vehicles.

Two hundred soldiers were then given real bullets. The workers responded by tossing Molotov cocktails and cinder blocks and building barricades of steel cable. Despite the killings and continued attacks of the army, at least 700 workers spent the night inside the plant. The next day the bishop, company manager and the general negotiated the safe exit of workers. There are several lawsuits filed by the union against the company, the general, and perhaps Sarney himself.

The strikers' demands were much the same as in the other strike movements, primarily the payment of cost-of-living increases suspended unilaterally by the government. The strike continued and was radicalized further through the continued military occupation of the factory. Despite the strike, the workers kept up the heat in furnaces so that they would not be damaged or require excessive start-up time when a settlement was reached.

A sad footnote to the courageous struggle of the steelworkers can be seen in the words of a principal leader of the PCB. It demonstrates just how far the Stalinists have been willing to go in collaborating with the government.

"The strike is legitimate because it is in the con-

stitution, but it isn't in the constitution that they [the CSN workers] can occupy the factory, use iron bars, or throw lime at the army troops. I think that this is a bad example, and when there is no democracy they will suffer even more."

Unfortunately this is not an isolated aberration on the part of the PCB or the left in general. Roberto Freire, the PCB's presidential candidate, has just proposed a new counter-terrorism plan. He has even met with Sarney and gained his approval, as well as that of Leonel Brizola, leader of the populist PDT, many within the PT and other left parties.

The plan, ostensibly aimed at preserving the "fragile democracy" from terrorist violence of the right and left, was actually made in response to a recent upsurge in militant strike actions by autoworkers. One of the offices of the Autolatina Volkswagen company in Sao Paulo suffered some damage during a plant takeover by more than 800 workers early in May. Jose Genoio, one of the most radical non-revolutionary PT leaders, agreed with Freire's basic idea but was against the participation of the government.

THE PT AND THE LEFT

All these events have been played out against desperate attempts by the bourgeoisie and the military to privatize and democratize before the explosion. Various inflation-fighting plans are announced, but they all amount to simple wage freezes and currency devaluations. They are given names like the "Social Pact" and are generally negotiated with Pelego union leaders. In actuality the government and its supporters like the 1% per day inflation rate; it allows the rich Brazilian and foreign investors who possess dollars to keep converting the foreign debt into increased holdings.

In the face of this, the left has clung to the hope of elections. Brizola warns that the continued strike wave will lead to a renewed control by the army and the cancelling of the presidential vote. Even Lula has started to praise the army.

The current line of the PT is to work for reforms now through purely parliamentary methods: socialism will come somewhere down the line. There are subjective revolutionaries within the PT, but they are clearly not in the ascendancy and may soon find themselves

expelled. Some of them, including comrades who helped found the PT, are now leaving it, sadly wiser about left reformist politics.

Recently, the leadership demanded an end to organized factions within the party. Erundina herself, who represents the left of the non-revolutionary majority, was bitterly opposed by Lula for the party's nomination. Furthermore, alliances have been sought and agreed upon with the PDT and the mildly social-democratic PSDB in various states, all aimed at improving the chances for successful PT administration under the bourgeois state.

In the light of the above it may be said that President Sarney's appraisal of his country's future is half correct. Brazil is headed toward socialist revolution. But most of the PT, including all wings of its leadership, is not set on that course. They are mainly concerned with either the pursuit of personal power and profit or traditional left-wing reformism. Brazil is a country where the consciousness of the workers is fast approaching revolution while their leaders are back-peddalling as furiously as they can.

It is no accident that "progressives" in the imperialist countries worship Lula and the PT. Their history is replete with patronizing adoration of charismatic third-world leaders, reflecting their yearning for a Bonapartist rescuer at home. A variant of the disease infects more radical pseudo-Trotskyist circles who imagine that the PT can be transformed into a revolutionary party.

For example, the U.S. Socialist Action group, entranced by Erundina's demagogic call for "popular councils," urges her supporters to lead the PT to "fully assume its revolutionary role in Brazil today." (*Socialist Action*, January 1989.) Workers Power of Britain takes comfort in the fact that the PT contains several political tendencies ranging from centrism to reformism: "As such it does not yet have a finished character. The pressure of the masses within the party make it possible to win it to a consistently revolutionary program." (*Workers Power*, December 1988.)

Against these views, authentic communists are gratified that far-left elements in the PT are overcoming their initial misconceptions. It is vital that Brazilian workers create a genuine revolutionary party, in order to fight the reformist misleadership of the PT. ■

tens of thousands, especially Creoles, have emigrated to the United States.

The two major political parties are both bourgeois and neo-colonial. The People's United Party (PUP), led by former Prime Minister George Price, was the traditional party of the nationalist middle class and bourgeoisie. A strictly electoralist organization, the PUP led the country to independence in 1981. It held office from the 1940s to the 1985 elections, which gave power to the openly right-wing United Democratic Party (UDP), preferred by international imperialism because of its "free enterprise" orientation and the sometimes radical rhetoric of the PUP. In 1987, however, the PUP recovered and triumphed in the municipal elections.

The WRU, originally known as the Workers United Front (FUT in Spanish), was formed in 1984 by former leaders of the PUP. They work mainly among the unemployed. In 1987 they joined an electoral coalition

Belize

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ish-speaking people who came from the Yucatan in the 19th century, as well as the influx of refugees especially from Guatemala and El Salvador, by this time it is possible that more residents speak Spanish than English.

Belize has a population of around 200,000, a third of whom live in Belize City, the former colonial capital. Although British and U.S. citrus, sugar and lumber companies have huge holdings, there is still land for cultivation by small farmers. The working class is small and dispersed. The largest concentration is in Belize City in shops, offices and transport. Its largest sector consists of agricultural laborers, including sugar refining and citrus processing workers. Most of the agricultural work is seasonal, unemployment is very high, and

with the PUP, despite misgivings about its pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist functioning, in the hope that its radical rhetoric reflected a genuine revolutionary potential. The FUT's aid was instrumental in the PUP's victory in the municipal elections. Disillusioned by the abuse and betrayals of the PUP (Sam Waight, mentioned in the WRU document, is a PUP representative who became Minister of Labor in the UDP government), they reoriented to an independent working-class position.



Belize: formally free but still under imperialist domination.

The WRU contacted the LRP because they had read issues of *Proletarian Revolution* and found themselves attracted by views expressed in this magazine. We welcome the WRU's commitment to proletarian revolution and socialism and are engaging with them in discussion of a number of outstanding questions.

We publish the WRU's Open Letter so that they may speak to a U.S. and international revolutionary audience in their own voice.

Open Letter to the People

Comrades, youth and activists from other political organizations:

With proletarian and revolutionary greetings, the new proletarian workers' movement WRU sees the need to communicate to the people the motive for making the decision to separate from the People's United Party.

We separated because previously the PUP had agreed to include the Workers United Front, now the WRU, in a coalition on the side of the people and in defense of the workers. The coalition was based on twenty points aimed at uniting the youth and the proletariat to the PUP permanently when the demands based on them were fulfilled. This would give the youth an opportunity to participate and at the same time enable its merits to stand out.

We recall that the FUT movement, now the WRU, was not a creation of the PUP. The workers' movement was born out of the conditions imposed by the two neo-colonialist party traditions. Hoping for a modern PUP, we took the initiative for coalition.

We can prove that our coalition served to help the party triumph, but in triumphing it didn't respect the agreements that had been made between the PUP and the WRU, agreements that had turned into disagree-

ments. We can also prove that the PUP is without morality or respect for the people because, to quote the ex-representative Sam Waight's own words in referring to the workers, "We can't pay much attention to the workers because they give no financial support."

Comrades, where will we end up with this kind of administration based on capitalist principles? It seems that the soil of Belize is still under the colonialist shadow. Comparing the colonialist system with today's

times, there has been no transition whatever towards the trade unions.

Further, the parties are dominated by the colonial capitalist system, because there are neither hospitals nor doctors for the sick. Nor is there education for the children of the poor, and we can see that we are living under modern-day slavery, where the wage the worker gets when he has a job pays only half of what he needs to eat.

Only a popular proletarian power can carry out the longed-for transition to authentic socialism with the proletariat at the head. This capitalist democracy only serves the interests of the bourgeoisie. Our revolutionary workers' union believes that to make the transition to socialism it is necessary to bury the traditional democratic colonialism represented by the traditional parties, which only obey North American imperialism.

We see the unions collecting dues from the Citrus Company workers, but when there they are asked to defend the workers' rights they refuse, simply because they are run by the government. With all this, the worker and the housewife have to endure the arbitrariness of these companies' bad jobs. And to this day, no party has listened to the unemployed workers, the ones that suffer most.

Only the Workers' Union can transform Belize into a country free of outside interference, interference which only serves to attack and jeopardize our neighbor countries. Only the union of revolutionary workers, as a new party with young leaders and new ideas as well as proletarian sentiments, can transform the policies of yesteryear and lead the country to socialism. We can take the road to people's power with the proletariat at the head. Thus we can provide the only vehicle that will carry us to the fulfillment of our destiny and satisfy the starving workers' desires for jobs and justice. ■

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Summer 1989

An Eyewitness Report

Brazil: The Carnival is Over

by A. Jefferson

On December 13, 1988, the *New York Times* published an article on the unlucky president of Brazil, Jose Sarney. It quoted him as saying

"Let's open our eyes because the left is formed by people who are determined, organized, and have clearly defined objectives. We are heading for the socialist revolution."

The cause for this warning was the thorough drubbing given his party and others on the right by the leftist Worker's Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, or PT) and the Democratic Labor Party (PDT) in nationwide municipal elections in November. The elections left Sarney's ruling Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) in control of hardly any city in the country.

ARMED STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM?

Luiza Erundina, the new mayor of Sao Paulo and a PT leader, agreed with Sarney. She declared shortly after her victory that "with my election the socialist revolution in Brazil begins." Days later on national TV she endorsed "armed struggle" to bring about socialism.

Heady stuff. It was hard not to get swept up in the excitement that overtook Sao Paulo in the wake of the PT's electoral triumph. Tens of thousands clogged the center of one of the largest cities in the world when the party held its victory celebration in the streets. Even many of the PT's leaders were surprised by the extent of their victory and the swell of popular enthusiasm that followed. They did what they could to dampen the workers' excitement before it got out of hand and frightened the bourgeoisie.

Olivio Dutra, former national president of the PT, new mayor of southern capital Porto Alegre and a close friend and advisor of principal party leader Luis Inacio da Silva ("Lula"), responded quickly to Erundina's statements: "The PT is a socialist party, but that doesn't enable us to predict that we are building socialism



because we won an election."

Erundina followed his lead and backtracked. She would support an armed struggle only if a majority of the workers decided that socialism couldn't eventually be instituted by the developing Brazilian "democracy." Now she said that the revolution began with her election in the sense that it showed "a change in values that

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A Revolutionary Manifesto from Belize

Introduction by Proletarian Revolution

A year ago the Workers Revolutionary Union (WRU) of the Central American country of Belize initiated correspondence with the LRP. They have asked us to publish their "Open Letter to the People." Since, as they observe in a letter to us, "Belize is almost an unknown country" to the rest of the world, we present this brief introduction, based partly on information provided by the WRU.

Belize is the former British colony of British Honduras, which achieved independence in 1981. Until recently it had been linguistically and ethnically closer to other former British colonies in the Caribbean than to Central America. The Creoles, or English-speaking blacks, were a plurality of the population and still predominate in the country, politically and socially.

But Central American history is catching up with Belize. Because of the growth of the indigenous Span-

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