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# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Fall 1990

No. 37



Re-Create  
the Fourth International

Published by the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

## Behind the Mid-East War Moves

At this writing, George Bush, Caesar of the modern Roman Empire, is pouring armored legions into the Arabian desert. The world tips at the edge of war – possibly “just” a regional conflict but one with the potential of escalating to the nuclear level.

The massive imperial response to Saddam Hussein’s seizure of Kuwait has swept away the mirages created by the end of the Cold War. It has exploded the tragicomic populist notion that “people before profits” can happen under capitalism. It proves that the so-called peace proclaimed by Bush, Gorbachev, Kohl & Co. is a cover for imperialism’s drive to “stabilize” – that is, repress – the working masses of the world in order to deepen their exploitation.

Indeed, behind the hoopla over patriotism and petroleum, imperialism is reaching for new levels of belligerence. It is bent on delivering the word of its god, Capital, to the

restive non-believers across the globe. The operation against Saddam is really directed against the masses whose potential for revolution must be crushed at all costs.

As always, the imperialist war build-up is accompanied by a hypocritical propaganda barrage. Iraq is condemned for invading Kuwait – by the U.S., which just yesterday invaded and occupied Panama, by the former colonial powers whose occupation of whole continents was ended by revolution, not repentance, and by Israel, whose very existence is an invasion of the Middle East. Saddam Hussein is depicted as the “Butcher of Baghdad” and a new Hitler – by those who armed him when he slaughtered oppositionists and spewed poison gas on Iranian soldiers and Kurdish civilians, and who are now trying to starve out the Iraqi population. Iraq’s chemical weapons are denounced as immoral – by

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### Leon Trotsky

Leon Trotsky was assassinated fifty years ago by order of Joseph Stalin. Along with Lenin, Trotsky had led the victorious proletarian revolution in Russia in 1917. Stalin was the architect of counterrevolution which, by the late 1930’s, restored capitalist exploitation in the USSR.

Trotsky spearheaded the struggle for proletarian independence and internationalism against Stalinism. Tragically, the latter succeeded in setting back socialist revolution for decades and defiling its very meaning.

Today the Stalinist system is in shambles and workers’ revolution is again on the rise. But Trotsky’s epigones, corrupted by Stalinism, present no way forward. In this issue of *Proletarian Revolution*, in the spirit of Trotsky’s advice to “say what is,” we present an article describing recent events in one wing of that sad milieu.

As part of the renewal of proletarian politics, we also feature a review of the LRP’s new book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism; A Resurrection of Marxist Theory*. This crucially important work not only analyzes the nature of Stalinism but casts intense light on the road ahead for working-class revolution and the re-creation of its leadership, Trotsky’s Fourth International.

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# No Peace with Racism

David Dinkins, New York's first black mayor, rode into City Hall last fall as a healer of racial tensions. But since he took office racism has only intensified. Police shootings of black and Latino youth have risen sharply. A jury failed to convict the ringleader of the Bensonhurst mob for the brutal murder of Yusuf Hawkins last summer, while whites continued to proclaim they would "protect" their neighborhood. Blacks justifiably exploded in outrage.

With New York gripped by a palpable racial tension, Dinkins' solution has been to tell everyone to stop hating each other and love thy neighbor instead. In the interests of "racial peace" he has taken the same position as his openly racist predecessor, Ed Koch. He calls for an end to the protest marches in Bensonhurst and in general blames perpetrators and protesters evenhandedly.

## DINKINS: KOCH II

While the majority of black New Yorkers still hope that Dinkins' efforts will achieve results against racism, not everyone is satisfied. Those who demonstrate under the slogan "No justice, no peace" now find a black mayor proposing peace without justice.

Dinkins' act reeks of hypocrisy. He would have us believe that racial tensions result only from bad attitudes, not the reality of life under capitalism. But now Dinkins, like Koch, imposes cuts in jobs and services — in order to hire more cops, who specialize in racist brutality rather than preventing crimes. Dinkins too makes each group fight each other over scarce jobs, housing and other vital needs of poor and working people.

Blacks and other minorities are inevitably scapegoated for the deepening austerity. White ethnic workers and petty bourgeois, especially those only a notch ahead financially, are told that every crumb given blacks and Latins means "they are getting it all at our expense." Elements among  
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# The Class War Today

In our Fall 1989 issue, based on the lessons of several militant labor struggles, we posed the question: has labor turned the corner in its defensive battle against capital's offensive? It has now become clear that a new wave of working-class resurgence has not arrived.

In the U.S. today, the numbers of strikes and strikers remain at postwar low levels. And those that have taken place have been isolated in the face of determined capitalist foes. In general, they have meant a great deal of sacrifice without achieving the goals the strikers originally fought for — where they have not ended in outright defeat.

But the situation is not as bleak as this catalog makes it appear. Even in adversity the workers have revealed their strength and have given evidence of a future upsurge.

Hormel meatpackers, Watsonville cannery workers and Phelps-Dodge miners in the mid-'80s, International Paper workers, Pittston coal miners, Eastern Airlines and Greyhound strikers more recently, have undertaken some of the bitterest and most determined labor battles in decades. These were not the sort of strikes that union bureaucrats dream of, minor episodes in "the collective bargaining process." They were gut struggles that unleashed the workers' intense class hatred.

## BUREAUCRATIC CRIMINALITY

In these conflicts, few strikers turned to scabbing, despite the intense pressures caused by long, no-win and seemingly never-ending strikes. The giant corporations they faced had the backing of government agencies and strike-breaking firms who recruited legions of outside scabs. Yet workers hung on.

To the strikers, these fights were over more than dollars and cents but for basic dignity against management's attempts to humiliate them. This has been especially clear in the strikes against hated bosses like Frank Lorenzo of Eastern and Fred Currey of Greyhound.

One side effect of these strikes is that they strip away the political cover of ex-New Left "progressives" lodged in well-paying positions in the union machines. These people justify their "practical" accommodations by blaming the workers for caring only about bread-and-butter issues.

But the biggest crime is the bureaucrats' sabotage and squandering of the workers' exemplary militancy. The Hormel strike was opposed by the AFL-CIO. The struggles in  
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## Proletarian Revolution

Published by the Socialist Voice Publishing Co. for the League for the Revolutionary Party. ISSN: 0894-0754.  
Editorial Board: Walter Daum, Evelyn Kaye, Sy Landy, Eric Nacar, Bob Wolfe.

Production: Leslie Howard, Jan Mills.  
Subscriptions: \$7.00 for 8 issues; \$15.00 overseas airmail, supporting subscriptions and institutions. Pay to Socialist Voice. Send to: **Socialist Voice; 170 Broadway, Room 201; New York, NY 10038, USA**

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### Pamphlets from the LRP and WR

See page 12 for information on pamphlets published by the LRP and Workers Revolution of Australia.



# New Book on Marxist Theory: **'The Life and Death of Stalinism'**

by Dave Franklin

The League for the Revolutionary Party has just published a major new book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism* by Walter Daum. It is an indispensable tool for understanding the system that has prevailed for over half a century in the Soviet Union and is now in upheaval in East Europe, China and elsewhere. Also, as indicated by its subtitle, *A Resurrection of Marxist Theory*, it is a far-reaching effort to restore Marx's original, class-determined conception of capitalism.

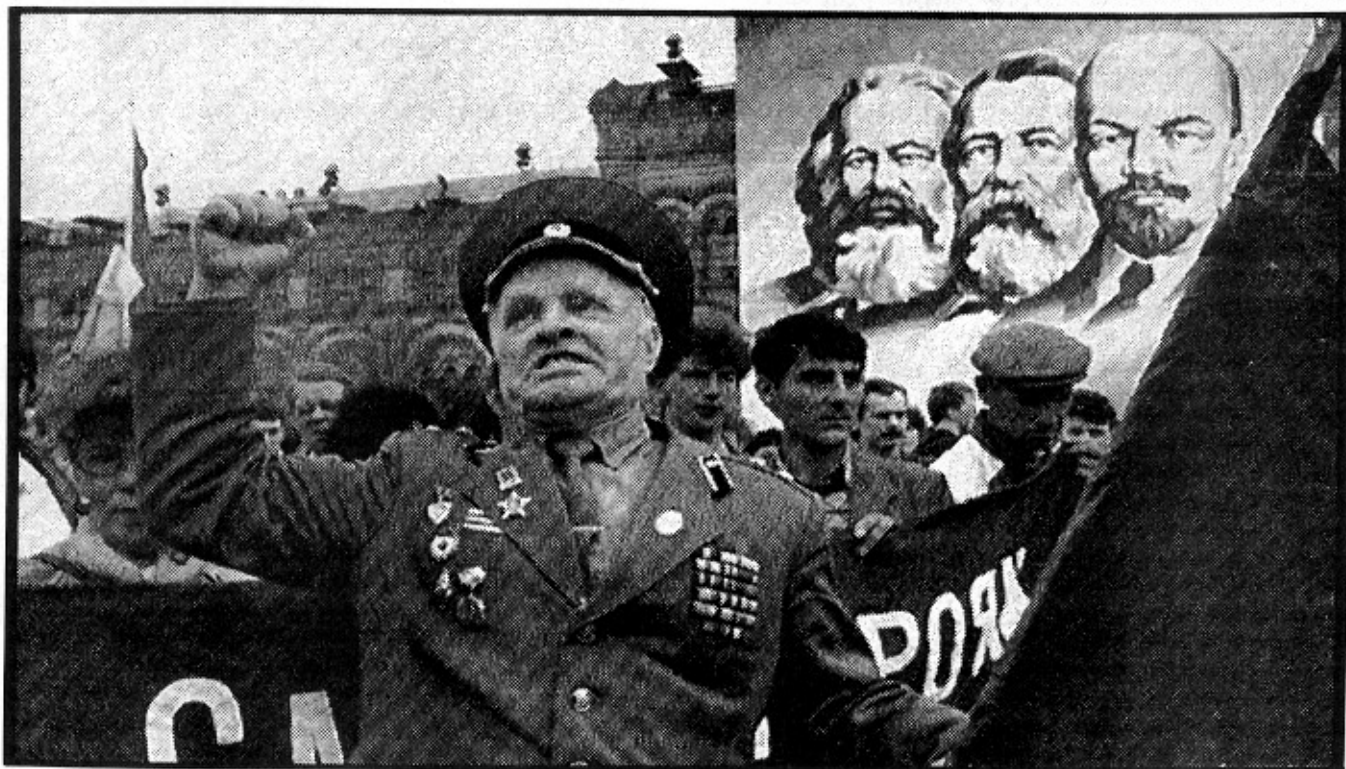
The book fills in the analysis behind the LRP's theory of Stalinist society as statified capitalism. The range of questions addressed includes capitalism's laws of motion in general and in this epoch in particular, the nature of imperialism today, the strategy of working-class revolution

the fall of Stalinism, a major barrier to the revival of class struggle is now gone. This book is based on high hopes for humanity and the revolutionary proletariat.

Many of the ideas addressed were first presented in this magazine, but in the book they can be treated with the necessary depth. They are not the work of one author alone but the product of years of discussion, debate and practical activity by the LRP and now its fraternal organization, Workers Revolution of Australia.

Among the key points of the LRP's theory of Stalinism elaborated in the book are the following:

1) Stalinism is a product of the decay of capitalism as that system is driven toward concentration and statification by its own internal laws. Although it presents itself as socialist and anti-imperialist, it is in reality counterrevolu-



*Stalinism paraded as Marxism. Today mass hatred is misaimed at communism. Tomorrow workers will resurrect authentic Marxism.*

(with an updating of the Trotskyist transitional program) and the development of socialist society. It could not be otherwise; after all, how can one determine whether states are capitalist, workers' states, or something else, without understanding these conceptions?

The question of Stalinism is of immense practical importance. A large fraction of the world's population, including tens of millions of workers, have lived under that system. And now crisis-ridden Stalinist society is engendering new struggles against capital — even if many workers for the moment think that it is socialism they are against and capitalism they are for!

Above all, the book is part of the struggle against the cynicism of our age, the patronizing contempt for the working class spawned by social democracy and Stalinism. With

tionary. Its function is to defeat and derail socialist revolutions and incorporate the working class in order to prolong the life of an obsolete system.

2) Stalinism is a highly contradictory brand of capitalism, warped by its origin as the usurper of the Soviet workers' state in the 1930's. Its drive for development in isolation was a reactionary utopia: as the book notes, "socialism in one country" inevitably became capitalism in one country. Its attempt to suppress capitalist economic laws through proletarian property forms and crude planning created a strikingly inefficient and unstable form of capitalism.

3) Stalinism's initial totalitarian period was battered by proletarian upheavals. It was forced to make concessions to the workers, accelerating its economic decline. In order to survive and better exploit the proletariat, it has had to

subordinate itself openly to Western imperialism and the discipline of the world market. Indeed, from the start it has been heading in the direction of pluralist capitalism, including openly competing capitals and the abolition of workers' gains that interfere with profit-making.

### RESURRECTING MARXISM

The investigation of Stalinism's pseudo-socialist capitalism required a thorough re-examination of the foundations of Marxism. The proletarian science has been grossly distorted for half a century, both by open opponents and by

alleged adherents. Falsifiers have succeeded not through any theoretical cleverness but because of the practical defeats of the working class, above all the degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

This situation necessitates both a peeling away of encrusted myths to rediscover revolutionary teachings, plus the application of the theory to the present-day world. Perhaps the best previous example is Lenin's rescue of Marx's theory of the state from social-democratic reformism in his *State and Revolution*.

In our time, the most fundamental distortion has been

## The LRP and the Russian Question

The book under review has taken years to write. It has been worked and re-worked to answer new theoretical problems and address rapidly unfolding events. So it is useful to see how the evolution of our views on Stalinism reflect our development as a political tendency.

Our group originated as a revolutionary current in the International Socialists in the early 1970's, an organization descended from the Shachtmanite split from Trotskyism in the 1940's and 1950's. The IS's healthiest elements were inspired and politically driven by the mass popular and working-class movements of the time — the French general strike of 1968, the black ghetto upheavals in the U.S. and the revolts in East Europe. In the most fundamental sense our tendency was created by these mass revolts.

We grew increasingly disenchanted with the IS's adaptation to the reformist labor bureaucracy. We began an across-the-board study of revolutionary perspectives, including a re-examination of Trotskyism and the "Russian question." The IS held the theory, developed by Max Shachtman, that Russia and the other Stalinist countries were a new form of class society, "bureaucratic collectivism." This theory gave no fundamental reason for deepening class struggle under Stalinism and fostered a purely democratic solution. Thus it served as a cover for leftists to make their peace with "democratic" capitalism, as indeed Shachtman and many followers did.

We groped towards a notion of state capitalism but were deterred by the theory of Tony Cliff (of the British IS). Cliff & Co. denied that capitalist laws operate inherently within Stalinism, and their whole political outlook was to accommodate to reformism. While our own theory was vague in the beginning and ran behind our political development in other areas, it was an advance in that it more tightly connected our hatred for the U.S. ruling class with a revolutionary opposition to Stalinism.

Our tendency was expelled from the IS in 1973 and formed the Revolutionary Socialist League. Although numbering only a little over a hundred, the RSL was the first genuinely revolutionary working-class organization in the U.S. in years. It made significant gains in understanding Stalinism. One was the idea that capitalism and capitalist property relations are based first and foremost on the division between labor and capital: the class struggle.

Another concerned the date of the counterrevolution: when did the USSR cease being a workers' state? The RSL rediscovered from Marx and Lenin that the law of value applied not only under capitalism but also under a workers' state; it was precisely the task of the workers' state to overcome this objective law over time through conscious, scientific planning. The RSL fought the "ortho-

dox Trotskyist" notion that the law of value had been supplanted by superior laws in the "workers' states." We also opposed the common state-capitalist notion that the USSR was capitalist simply because capitalist economic forms predominated. The RSL correctly dated the counterrevolution at the time of the great purges of the late 1930's, arguing that only then were the last vestiges of workers' power wiped out.

Despite its promising beginnings, the RSL got mired in the lull in the class struggle and in its political isolation from the working class. Cynicism deepened; the leadership substituted gimmicks and opportunism for principled struggle for the hearts and minds of advanced workers. Our minority fought this degeneration but was confronted with a squalid factional fight, not political debate.

The RSL's stagist "democratic" outlook at home was mirrored by a more "practical" judgment of Stalinism as a strong and viable contender for world domination — the standard view held by cold warriors, Kremlin sycophants and virtually the entire left. Our counterposition — that the USSR was economically and socially weak under its military build-up — proved remarkably accurate.

The faction fight ended in our expulsion and the founding of the LRP in 1976. Political life has not been easy for our small organization. The labor bureaucracy has kept the workers in check, and opportunities for testing our ideas in mass struggles have been very few. But we have not only maintained our toehold in the working class but have deepened our experience by participating in several important class struggles. Abroad we have gained comrades in Australia and have developed other promising international contacts.

On the Russian question, the LRP has corrected the RSL's errors and made many advances, embodied in this book. In our theoretical work, political analysis and daily activity, the unifying factor is the understanding that capitalism's motion and change are rooted in the proletarian class struggle — even when that struggle is unconscious of its own implications.

The willingness to fight against the current requires the revolutionary optimism characteristic of authentic Marxists. The future is brighter now that the bestial obstacle of Stalinism is being smashed. Revolutionary upheavals are deepening throughout the world. Not the least positive sign is that sales of our book are already going well, especially abroad where the struggle is more mature. It is no accident that the RSL has now self-destructed just at the point where communists can see encouraging opportunities for the resurrection of the Marxist vanguard.



to suppress Marx's understanding of the centrality of class struggle. It is both the motive force of capitalism's development and the key to its destruction. In their effort to replace proletarian revolution with populism and class collaboration, middle-class theorists have declared competition to be the inner essence of capitalism, not the derivative aspect it was for Marx. Although Marx condemned this small shopkeeper outlook, today most of those who speak in his name subordinate the proletariat to one or another competing sector of the bourgeoisie.

But Marx's writings cannot be treated as Holy Scripture. (To do so is a gross insult to a thinker whose motto for his own work was "Doubt everything.") Hence our book does not hesitate to criticize our teachers when we think that their efforts have fallen short.

Take Marx's theory of the falling rate of profit. He noted that surplus value, the source of profits, was based on living labor. Capitalists must measure their rate of profit against their total investment, which includes ever larger amounts of constant capital — dead labor. Thus arises the



East German counter sign reads, "Please do not disturb: shift changeover." Angry working class will "disturb" East-West German capitalist shift change.

tendency for the rate of profit to fall. Marx, however, did not effectively weave this insight into his theory of capitalism's periodic crises — partly because he could not envision the system's operation under imperialism and monopoly capitalism. As a result, he never successfully showed how the falling rate of profit tendency could overcome the countertendencies also engendered by capitalist development. And he did not explain how a workers' state, which would certainly increase the relative weight of machinery to save workers' labor, would not be overwhelmed by this dilemma and be subject to crises as much as capitalism.

Comrade Daum links the falling rate of profit tendency to the system's multiplicity of independent capitals. He explains how monopoly capitalism deepens this tendency. And he applies this theory to the Stalinist states to help

account for their increasing backwardness. As well, a workers' state will begin overcoming this tendency by abolishing competing capitals. (The book's explanation is of course more detailed and complete — which is why one must read it and not just a review.)

Other basic Marxist questions clarified in the book include:

The theoretical anticipation of state capitalism in the writings of Marx and Engels and their extension under modern conditions by Lenin and Trotsky;

The vital distinction between socialist society and the workers' state transitional to it, a distinction habitually blurred by all interpreters from Maoists to ultra-leftists and would-be Trotskyists;

Trotsky's necessary differentiation between political and social counterrevolution in a workers' state. In the book this point is studied closely to illuminate Trotsky's well-known use of analogies to the French revolution (Thermidor and Bonapartism) in order to show how the political counterrevolution of the 1920's developed into the social overthrow in the 1930's.

And since Trotsky's work, *The Revolution Betrayed*, is the necessary starting point for any Marxist analysis of Stalinism, Daum undertakes a careful analysis of Trotsky's developing and changing theory. This results in a deep appreciation of his understanding of Stalinism's counterrevolutionary nature, as well as a critique and explanation of his failure to see that the capitalist counterrevolution finally won out in the USSR.

#### PERMANENT REVOLUTION EXTENDED

Another example of a theory which has been corrupted is permanent revolution. This cornerstone of Trotskyism was originally applied to Russia and then extended by Trotsky to embrace a world perspective.

Permanent revolution means that in the epoch of capitalist decay, only the internationalist proletarian revolution can fulfill the tasks once carried out by bourgeois democracy. Faced with the rising threat of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie abandons the demands of its own revolution, for fear that the workers will use them as a weapon against capitalism. In the book, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution is closely integrated with Lenin's theory of imperialism, and both are tied to Marx's laws of capitalist development.

In the aftermath of World War II, however, a number of democratic gains were made by forces not led by the proletariat: national liberation struggles, Stalinist and non-Stalinist, were successful in many parts of the "third world." Oppressed groups were able to make gains in the imperialist centers themselves, and living standards were improved at least temporarily. All this happened without a revolutionary internationalist leadership of the proletariat.

It is clear this has to be accounted for, but how? One solution is to claim that permanent revolution is wrong, as many leftists do. One version says that permanent revolution has been "deflected" by the workers' "failure" to act as Trotsky predicted, a view that ignores the fact that the workers did rise up after the war but were defeated because of Stalinism. Another distortion is to rob permanent revolution of its proletarian content: that is, the middle-class forces that led these struggles are part of an objective revolutionary process — hence they can lead socialist struggles as substitutes for the self-organized working class.

Against these views the LRP introduced a corollary to permanent revolution: in the wake of the international proletarian defeat, middle-class (including Stalinist) forces can

secure some democratic and popular gains. The sanctity of property can be challenged when the proletariat had been rendered temporarily unable to take such challenges to their socialist conclusion. But the middle-class leaders cannot systematize or long maintain these gains, much less achieve socialism. They become defenders of capitalism.

This description of what took place in the postwar years is a defense of permanent revolution itself. It is based on the chief premises of the theory and renews its validity in the light of new experiences. It allowed the LRP, like no other left tendency, to see well in advance that new revolutions (like those in Angola and Nicaragua) could not become Stalinized, since their rulers were not in position to entrap and crush the proletariat.

We have also charted completely new territory for Marxism in examining the Stalinist system. We developed a theory of Stalinist imperialism, a question that has not only been left unsolved by *all* other theories of Stalinism — even those labeling it a class society — but has not even been raised at the theoretical level. How capitalism's laws of motion operate in a stratified economy as an extension of their operation in the imperialist epoch is another part of the exhaustive analysis in this book.

## STYLE AND CONTENT

Some comments should be made concerning the book's style. First, its polemical tone: this is a combative book. It develops extensive and often severe attacks on a variety of Marxist "authorities." The purpose is much more than to bring our ideas into sharper relief, although that is a welcome result. Our differences are not questions of alternate roads to the same goal of socialist revolution but of alternate class outlooks.

The book dissects a variety of theories — Soviet defencist, state capitalist, bureaucratic collectivist, etc. — in particular those of Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel, Tony Cliff, Max Shachtman, Paul Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim. It shows that what permeates their analyses of capitalism, Stalinism and socialism as well as their political prescriptions is a deep cynicism towards the working class.

The question comes down to revolution against capitalism versus reform and class collaboration in its defense. The ultimate service the left renders to capitalism is to build a last-ditch obstacle to masses moving in a revolutionary, class-conscious direction. The reformists must be politically defeated, and sections won over to revolution, if a viable proletarian vanguard is to be constructed to lead the class to victory and liberate the human race. The stakes are high, and the book's polemical tone reflects this.

For this reason, Marxist works in general are highly polemical: they wage the class struggle on the level of ideas. From the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital* to practically all of Lenin's works, Marxists have waged bitter battles against both open opponents and inconsistent allies. We follow in the same tradition, with the same purpose. The best elements of the left will be won only through principled combat. In Trotsky's words, we "say what is."

The book is not casual, easy reading. It is a tightly woven work that does not promote skipping; in terms of literary style, parts are dry and could use some added flair and color. It remains intense throughout and is particularly taxing in the sections on Marxist "economics." Although the book contains much historical data and economic statistics, it always draws out the political consequences. Therefore, even a beginner in Marxist theory who is a serious reader will be able to follow the analysis.

Anyone concerned with controversial questions of class

struggle and world politics will find it deeply interesting and decidedly challenging. As well, while the book is aimed at the proletarian vanguard, it establishes the basis for a popular exposition of the LRP's theory.

## THE SOCIALIST FUTURE

Every major work has its political weaknesses, if only relative ones, and *The Life and Death of Stalinism* is no exception. The weakest section is the exposition of the Marxist conception of how the workers' state makes the transformation from capitalism to socialism and an outline of socialist (and communist) society. The book does a good job of exposing standard leftist conceptions, once again demonstrating their middle-class character. Still, in comparison with other sections, the discussion is left at an abstract level. What a socialist society would look like is not drawn in detail.

The fact remains that this weakness is a problem for Marxism itself. Marx analyzed the capitalist society he lived in and projected his vision of the workers' state and socialism from the clues he found in capitalist society. Because he was scientific, he refused to engage in any elaborate pictures of the socialist future but kept to a minimum outline. There is not a great amount of material that can be added to Marx's original vision, although the book does add a few wrinkles. In part, this is a reflection of how far he was ahead of his time. But it also reflects the fact that we cannot rely on the experiences of living workers' states to strengthen our conceptions. The only model we have, the early Soviet state, offers only fleeting and distorted insights because of its isolation and backwardness. New breakthroughs have to await the new experiences of revolutionary workers' societies.

## TESTING THEORY

A Marxist analysis of the present-day world should be capable of political foresight. The upheavals within Stalinism in the past year have confirmed our analysis and prognoses. No, we didn't predict that the Berlin Wall would open on November 9, 1989; crystal-ball gazing is impossible. But we were able to outline the direction forced upon the Stalinist societies by their economic crises: their steady move toward pluralism and decentralization, their inevitable breakdowns, and their growing dependence on the West.

These insights were not stopgap explanations to cover a quick turn of events; they were developed years in advance. Using our theory we projected — at the height of the cold war — that the dividing line for a future world war would be drawn between the U.S., Germany and Japan rather than between the U.S. and the USSR.

This contrasts with the confusion and simple wrong-headedness of the majority of the left. Practically every prominent "Marxist" proclaimed that the Soviet Union had overcome capitalism's inevitable crises or embarked on an unstoppable epoch of economic expansion. Most theories saw the USSR as a strong power and successor to traditional capitalism, for good or for bad. We said the opposite, and Stalinism's collapse has confirmed our prediction.

Our theory also tells us that Stalinism's downfall does not make Western capitalism any more viable. With its Stalinist prop crippled, imperialism must face the rebellious masses without the help of this seemingly independent force that used the credentials of the revolution it usurped to betray liberation and working-class struggles. In whatever form, capitalism is in a state of reactionary decay. This understanding is corroborated by daily life under capitalism but remains to be fully confirmed in the coming period.



## WHITHER STALINISM?

Understandably, many East European workers accept the bourgeois assessment of Stalinism: that its collapse proves both the failure of Marxism and the need for market forces and Western capital. The Western line appears credible because they have suffered under oppressive "socialism" for decades and the West is in better shape. As a result, the revolutions of the past year, made possible by the immense social power of the working class, are being hijacked by pro-bourgeois and pro-Western forces.

But the West will be unable to deliver the goods. Western capitalism is itself in trouble. Loans to East Europe will come to much less than hoped, and investments are dribbling in very slowly. Western capital is overextended and needs a cathartic crisis to clean out its weakest firms and more thoroughly exploit the workers. As under Stalinism, however, the system's giant companies are interlinked, so that if one or two fall the entire economy is endangered. Hence governments continue to prop up the weakening structure, guaranteeing only that the collapse when it comes will be all the more devastating. The book's explanation of how the forms of Stalinist decay are being mirrored in the West is very much to the point.

Moreover, a Marxist analysis of Stalinism (and post-Stalinism) as capitalist shows us that the new bourgeois honeymoon with the East European workers cannot last. In Germany, there is mounting opposition to the terms of unification, as jobs and living standards come under attack. In Poland, resistance to the austerity program has burst out; it required the authority of Lech Walesa to end workers' strikes against the government he brokered himself. In the USSR, Gorbachev has been unable to impose his drastic austerity program, openly citing the fear of mass explosions.

It was, after all, the potential proletarian revolution in

Poland that showed Gorbachev the handwriting on the wall and thrust perestroika and glasnost onto his agenda. Other working-class upheavals, or the threat of them, forced the Stalinists out of power in East Europe. And Eastern workers have shown that while they reject Stalinism, they support the gains won from the Stalinist regimes — above all the right to a job. The mass unemployment accompanying the "free market" will not go down easy. The contradictory laws of *capitalism* in the East have already torn Stalinism asunder, and the class struggle which these laws configure gives authentic communists confidence that social revolution is on the agenda.

## REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM AND PARTY

The situation is wide open. Some of the most decadent and reactionary social forces like religious mysticism and chauvinism have re-emerged. Stalinism will continue to decompose, and the capitalists of all varieties will continue to try to deepen exploitation, prompted by an growing world economic crisis. Whether or not the bosses succeed will depend on the class struggle: the proletariat's ability to mount a revolutionary defense and counteroffensive.

A first step in building that defense is the elaboration of a strategy for socialism. The book presents a program of demands and methods as a bridge from the workers' present consciousness and experiences to revolutionary conclusions. It is based on Trotsky's Transitional Program, and it includes new demands to meet the new conditions.

The basic method is the same under Stalinism as under Western capitalism. An outline appeared in our last issue and a full exposition is in the book. Most organizations claiming to be Trotskyist avoid programmatic specifics, issuing vague calls for workers' power and a "political

*An Indispensable*

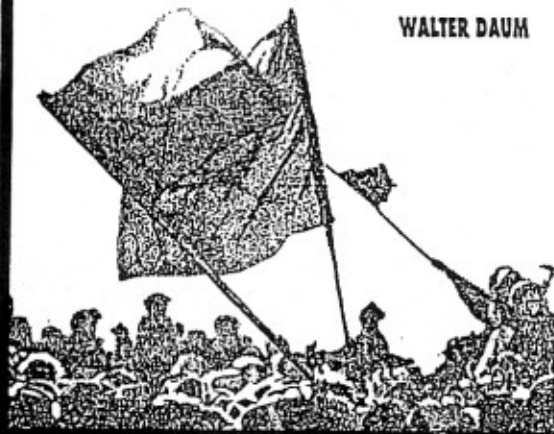
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revolution" against Stalinism – while giving direct or backhanded support to the post-Stalinist regimes. Some do apply the *anti-capitalist* demands of the Transitional Program to Stalinism – but without explaining how this makes sense in what they suppose are workers' states.

The explosions under Stalinist rule are just some of the hot spots in a seething world. From Johannesburg and Seoul to Beijing and Moscow, a new upsurge of the world proletariat is gaining momentum. To meet that challenge there have arisen a variety of "radical" solutions, based on a defeatist notion of the working class, which aim to keep the proletariat chained to middle-class leaders. The Marxist alternative sees the potential of the proletariat to change the world and to build its own leadership and movement. The book makes the choice that much clearer.

Indeed, the summation of the book's program is the necessity for the re-creation of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution. The proletariat needs its mass organizations of struggle and class rule. But without

an organization embodying its most advanced consciousness – the revolutionary party – such institutions invariably turn against the class's interests. This lesson is drawn through historical examples and the book's sharp critiques of alternative programs, above all those in revolutionary guise.

In our time the revolutionary party must be Trotskyist. But not the "Trotskyism" that betrays the centrality and independence of the working class, not the "Trotskyism" that tails nationalism and Stalinism in the name of spurious "Fourth Internationals." Trotsky aptly pointed out that as objective conditions come to a head in our epoch, the crisis of humanity is encapsulated in the crisis of proletarian leadership. That is above all why the book insists on confrontation with pseudo-Marxist conceptions.

The decomposition of Stalinism in the past year is a vindication of our tendency's world view. The glue that holds capitalism together is becoming unstuck. This book can arm working-class revolutionaries with the authentic Marxism they need for the great days ahead. ■

## **Healyism with a Human Face:** **New Stage Claimed in Budapest**

Budapest, Hungary was the scene in April of a conference "on the unity of workers East and West." Or at least that is how it was billed beforehand. Sponsored by the Preparatory Committee, an international body centered on the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) of Britain, the event turned out to be something very different: the founding convention of yet another organizational pretender to the mantle of Trotskyism, the "Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International" (WI).

In contrast to the conference on "Marxism and the Productive Forces" organized by the same groups in London six months before (see *Proletarian Revolution* No. 36), the Budapest meeting was remarkably unproductive. Political preparation was haphazard, substantive discussion was sparse, and discussion of the way forward for the proletarian revolution – East, West, South or anywhere – was left floating above clouds of rhetoric.

### **A SHOW, NOT A CONFERENCE**

The centerpiece in Budapest was a speech by Balazs Nagy (Michel Varga), leader of the Hungarian League of Revolutionary Socialists (LRSH), that catalogued the eternal theoretical assumptions of his tendency. Comrade Nagy claimed continuity with Trotsky's Fourth International and traced the history of the Preparatory Committee, contrasting it to the democratic illusions of Ernest Mandel and other betrayers of Trotskyism. He denounced parliamentary democracy as a farce and no answer for the proletariat. He reiterated his group's implacable hostility to Stalinism and pointed to the danger of capitalist restoration in East Europe. He spoke ringingly of the need for revolutionary internationalism, the rebuilding of the Fourth International and the decisiveness of working-class leadership.

But despite its length, Nagy's speech made little attempt to link its verities with concrete strategies and programs. So the discussion from the floor consisted mainly of affirmations by rank and file comrades of the need for revolution, the importance of the conference and the notable fact that it was taking place in Hungary. The lackluster discussion was not the fault of these comrades. There was too little to sink one's teeth into. (For Nagy's speech and some of the discussion, see the reports in the WI's journal,

*The International*, June 1990.)

The main documents were two resolutions submitted by the Preparatory Committee: one political, one organizational. (A number of short reports were also given on conditions in Britain, Ireland, Namibia and South Africa.) The political resolution was by universal admission so contradictory and inadequate that it had to be withdrawn. Since then, in the WRP's hype for the new tendency, Nagy's speech has been used as a makeshift founding statement.

All this reflects the fact that the conference was designed to be a performance – nothing more, nothing less. It was not intended to work out a political line so that delegates could argue out a clear basis for agreement. It did not maximize debate or draw out the differences that exist. It was held in Budapest so that the new international could be ballyhooed as having been launched at the first Trotskyist conference in post-Stalinist Europe. Delegates were shipped in to provide a choral accompaniment to the main act. And not only was the conference a show, but the new Workers International has some of the same character.

### **DIVERGENT VIEWS**

The LRP and our fraternal group, Workers Revolution of Australia, also submitted a document, "Theses on the East European Revolutions and the Transitional Program" (see p. 15), which offered a program and strategy for workers' revolution in East Europe based on our theory that Stalinism is a form of capitalism. Our *Theses* were not distributed by the Conference organizers, although they had been presented well in advance. When we complained, we received an apology and the document was made available on the last day. But presentation time was denied; we were told we could speak from the floor in the same way as comrades who had not submitted documents.

We do not claim that we were treated particularly badly. In the context of conference-as-performance, our presence was not important except to liven things up. In the end we turned out to be a bit of a pain in the butt for the organizers.

In any case, our representatives had serious and useful discussions with a number of the comrades attending. Of course, we also met cynics unwilling to hear any challenge



to their assumptions — people resembling members of more politically moribund tendencies like the American SWP and the Spartacists. Still, what distinguishes this tendency is its relatively large number of healthy forces.

It was clear that in the ranks of the WRP there are comrades with divergent opinions on the “deformed workers states,” even though they cling to the same formula; some reject the idea altogether. There are also differences on how to relate to the national struggles around the world and on the slogan of national self-determination in the Eastern countries, a tricky problem for all who consider these workers’ states. Contrasting views on questions of women’s liberation and party democracy were also evident.

Unfortunately little of this diversity reached the floor, aside from two dissenting views. Tom Kemp, a well known economist and writer for the WRP press, raised doubts without counterposing an alternate perspective. He questioned the term “deformed workers states” as a description of East Europe in the light of recent events. He correctly attributed the term to “the devil himself,” Michel Pablo, the leader of the Fourth International in the postwar years who nearly dissolved it into the CP’s and SP’s. Comrade Kemp also challenged Nagy’s prognosis that imperialism was bent on impoverishing the masses of East Europe: “You can’t extract, far less realize, surplus value from a pauperized population.”

Obviously we considered his first question to be significant, even though Kemp did not elaborate a position. His second question, however, confuses the consequences of the

capitalists’ actions (austerity) with their subjective intentions (exploitation); he overlooks the fact that capitalism as a system is not consciously controllable by its rulers. Therefore, like others in the WRP, Cde. Kemp still shows signs of the conspiratorial approach that characterized this tendency when it was led by the late and unlamented Gerry Healy, the guiding spirit of the WRP and its International Committee (IC) for decades.

Kemp’s remark also betrays an un-Marxist underconsumptionist view of capitalism, implying that its chief aim is to sell goods to the workers (that is, to realize surplus value from them) rather than to accumulate surplus value off their labor. Both Nagy and Kemp are blinded by a theory that denies exploitation under Stalinism. They do not see that the reforms sought by Stalinists, post-Stalinists and their Western allies are designed to increase profit rates by deepening exploitation — or that the basis of the crisis in the East is the same as in the rest of world capitalism.

Without understanding the connection between exploitation and reform under Stalinism, there is no secure footing for a revolutionary perspective in the East.

LRP and WR speakers from the floor outlined our analysis of Stalinism and challenged others to spell out their programs for revolution in the East. We contended that all of the demands in the sections of Trotsky’s Transitional Program on the struggle against capitalism must be raised in the Stalinist states — not just the more limited demands he raised for the Stalinist USSR in 1938. Our point was that a class-against-class social revolution is in order in the Stalinist countries, not just a political revolution.

Some conference leaders took the floor to criticize Cde. Kemp and to a lesser extent the LRP-WR. Osvaldo Garmendia of Argentina noted that we “characterize the essence of capitalism as above all involving the wage relation” and claimed that “such a relation existed in the Soviet Union, in 1917, in 1920-1921, throughout Lenin’s life.” His point was that we ought to regard the early Soviet workers’ state as capitalist. This reveals a misunderstanding of capitalist production relations. The essential “wage relation” under capitalism means the exploitation of one class by another, and class exploitation by the state did not exist in Lenin’s USSR, even though workers were paid wages. Cde. Garmendia does not distinguish between form and content: he sees the similarity of form — wages — and deduces that the “relation” is the same.

#### THE MYTH OF NATIONALIZED PROPERTY

Garmendia added that “They [the LRP and WR] reply that we characterize capitalism by private ownership in the means of production. In so doing I believe we are following Marx.” That is a common but false belief. Those who find the essence of capitalism in its legal forms rather than its class relations again make an anti-dialectical confusion of appearance with essence, hardly Marx’s method!

It is taken as a commonplace by most Trotskyists (and practically everybody else) that a country in which the economy is nationalized cannot be capitalist. Obvious though that may seem, however, it wasn’t accepted by Trotsky:

“Theoretically, to be sure, it is possible to conceive a situation in which the bourgeoisie as a whole constitutes itself a stock company which, by means of its state, administers the whole national economy. The economic laws of such a regime would present no mysteries.” (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 245.)

It follows that a totally state-owned economy does not have to be non-capitalist. And its economic laws could be fully grasped, despite the absence of a free market. Trotsky



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doubted that the old bourgeoisie itself could nationalize a whole economy in practice, and he was right: it took the Stalinists to do it. Nevertheless, it is obvious that a statified economy did not mean a workers' state. This idea, taken directly from Marx and Engels, should not be a shock to Marxists, but it inevitably is to many who have swallowed the bourgeois notion that capitalism is based on competition, not the exploitation of wage labor.

We would add that nationalized property is indeed a proletarian property form. The market is a surface form also, crucial to a healthy capitalist economy where exploitation is carried out most efficiently. But the dialectical method reminds us that form does not determine content; the relation between the two can be not only contradictory but even qualitatively so.

In citing the political interchange over our views, we do not mean to exaggerate its importance in the discussion; it was decidedly peripheral. The fact that our theory was answered only by occasional potshots enabled the leaders to avoid presenting their own theory of Stalinism, which is by their own admission undeveloped. And by placing these isolated points on an abstract level, crucial as that is, they also avoided discussing concrete perspectives for the revolution in East Europe. Theory was not treated as a guide to action; indeed, the only "practice" mentioned was the triumphal proclamation of the new international.

#### THE LEGACY OF HEALYISM

The method that dominated the Budapest Conference is not new. It was the stock-in-trade of the notorious Healy. There is indeed continuity between the Healyite IC and the new WI, but not that claimed by Nagy and others. We do not mean to suggest that the WRP and WI are carbon copies of Healy's IC or political liars and thugs. No, this is Healyism with a human face.

As we commented in a 1986 article on the explosion in the WRP (*Proletarian Revolution* No. 27), "Healy's WRP was a blowfish party: wrapped in its daily newspaper, it puffed itself up to look impressive enough to rival the larger Communist Party and even the Labor Party." Healy also inflated the party through theatrical extravaganzas featuring movie stars recruited to the party (not by coincidence). Members and contacts who barely knew what was

happening often found themselves bundled off to "mass conferences" — as "delegates," no less — to fill seats and pass motions on they knew not what, so that the WRP could demonstrate its fictitious clout. "Stage-ism" took on a whole new meaning under Healy.

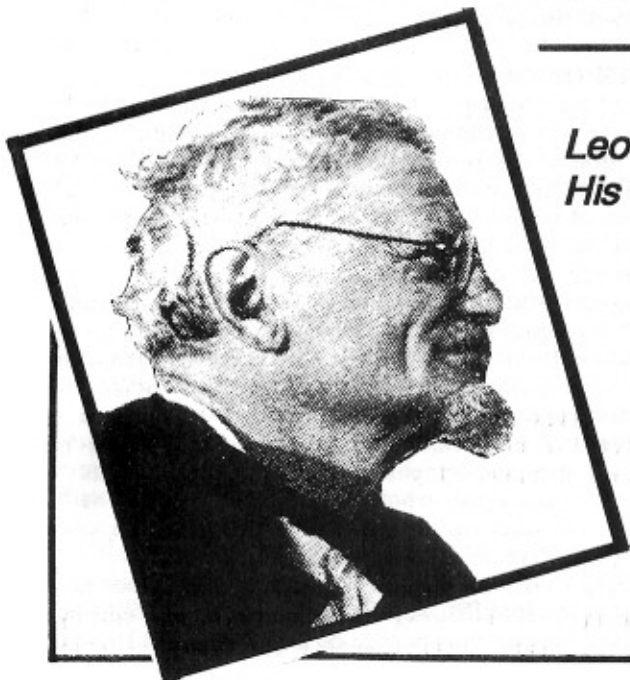
Healy's press-gang tactics are a far cry from the open persuasion used by today's WRP leaders to get members to events like Budapest. Nevertheless, the concept of organization-as-blowfish is the same. That is the main reason why Budapest wasn't a conference to facilitate serious discussion among members, let alone with outsiders.

There were other reasons. The WRP used theory, mainly a phony dialectical materialism, to overawe his followers. In Healy's hands dialectics became not a method for understanding and changing the world but a theology meant to be unfathomable to ordinary workers and comrades. In the same way that religious mysteries served ancient priesthoods, the monopoly of dialectics kept Healy's shamans in power. Political economy likewise was used for crisis-mongering, not for understanding and action. In general, the party was treated as the tool of its political boss and his entourage, rather than the organized expression of advanced proletarian consciousness. In his Olympian words, Healy would "intersect" with the working class attracted by his bigger-than-life party rather than fight in it for leadership.

#### THEORY AND PRACTICE

Healy's "theory" of dialectics was really a patchwork serving the pragmatic aim of maintaining his grip on the organization. If there was any constant in the theory as it grew over time, it was the idealist notion that world events were unimportant if they undermined the leaders' theories. Whereas the bulk of what passes for Trotskyism today assumes as fact what in reality is surface form, the old Healyism virtually denied the importance of facts altogether. Of course, since Healy had to operate in the real world, there was a relation between theory and practice: theory was not a guide but a cover for a highly opportunist practice.

Since there was no common methodology to guide the party in action, political positions could only be determined by the central arbiter, the party's Bonaparte himself. So serious internal life was non-existent, and deep disagreements would inevitably be followed by expulsions and splits.



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For example, in proclaiming the crucial importance of theory, the Healyites called Stalinism the arch-enemy of revolutionary socialism and mankind. Yet they never worked out a theory of Stalinism beyond what Trotsky had left behind half a century ago. Like orthodox priests, they rubbed handy quotations from the Master like so many rosary beads but never learned the method underlying the Word. They dared not try to explain in depth the notion of “deformed workers’ states” created by enslaving the working class. They never sought to analyze the laws of motion of Stalinism so as to better intervene in living struggles – the major reason Marxists undertake theoretical work.

When Healy split from Pablo and Mandel, he seethed with revolutionary rhetoric in denouncing even the smallest concession to Stalinism. Yet this orthodoxy was used as a cover for concessions to Stalinism. Mao’s Red Guards and his wing of the Chinese bureaucracy, for example, could be supported on the grounds that they could not be Stalinist since they were progressive. Thus was theoretical orthodoxy a cover for rampant tailism. It was also mindblowingly contradictory: Mao and China were venerated, but Castro and Cuba were labeled capitalist and anathematized.

Similarly, denunciations of nationalism covered for British ethnocentrism and support for (and financial aid from) explicit nationalists like Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein. The gap between theory and practice also stimulated the WRP’s crazy conspiracy-theory explanations of events, including its criminal “Security and the Fourth International” vendettas against political opponents on the left.

#### PABLO’S DEFORMED THEORY

When Tom Kemp credited the deformed workers’ state theory to “the devil” Pablo, he was right. Whatever their differences on important aspects of the theory – like whether the postwar Stalinist states were created by the working class or by crushing it – all its proponents from Mandel to Nagy agree on the fundamental proposition. And that means a denial of the Marxist principle that only the proletariat can make the socialist revolution.

Trotsky had made the point sharper during the Spanish civil war: the proletariat could not achieve power through popular fronts even with “the shadow of the bourgeoisie.” That too was tossed aside, for in East Europe, China, etc., the Stalinists took power always with shadow (and not-so-shadow) bourgeois parties in tow. They proclaimed People’s Democracies, not workers’ states; it was left to the pseudo-Trotskyists to provide that “proletarian” cover.

It followed that if the petty-bourgeois Stalinists could create workers’ states – that is, make the *social* revolution – little was left for the working class but the superstructural and democratic tasks of a follow-up political revolution. Why then do the workers need an independent class party, much less a world party? It was no accident that the deformed workers’ state theory and the “deep entrism” into the CP’s and SP’s were engineered by the same leadership.

The postwar Trotskyists’ acceptance of Stalinism’s revolutionary capacity, however warped, was not an isolated theoretical mistake. It reflected their altered class position at home. Reformism, both social-democratic and Stalinist, which Trotsky had properly called social chauvinist and counterrevolutionary, was now seen as semi-progressive: reformists “didn’t go far enough.” Thus the adaptations abroad only reflected the adaptations at home. Healy and Lambert, the IC leaders, no less than Mandel (and likewise Max Shachtman) advocated deep entry and unwavering “critical support” to the CP’s or SP’s in country after country. In practice, the Trotskyist organizations became

pressure groups, not nuclei of proletarian parties.

Subjectively, the “orthodox Trotskyists” of the Healy school felt the need for an independent party more strongly than did the Mandelites. But that just meant that their centrism was more deep-seated. Revolutionary rhetoric, however sincerely believed, used as a cover for reformist practice has always been the hallmark of centrism, not the proof of revolutionary continuity.

#### THE POTENTIAL OF THE WRP

No one now in the WRP (or the WI) denies the capitulations across the class line made by Healy to the Labour Party, Tito, Stalinism and nationalism in general – his proletarian rhetoric notwithstanding. But the roots have yet to be pulled out.

The old Healyism has been cracked if not shattered. The wall between theory and practice remains, however, as Budapest shows. Until that wall is shattered, Healy’s legacy will endure. And that undermines all the claims of revolutionary continuity by the new Workers International.

Of course, today the wall is not what it was. Comrades recognize that major theoretical work must be done; that was a reason for the London conference and even for their desire to engage in discussion with us. But it is not clear *why* they think theory is necessary. If it is simply to replace the old theoretical postures with a new, more humane, rationalization, then the WRP is stumbling down the old road. Theory will be used to puff up a hollow organization, not to guide a viable one along a revolutionary path.

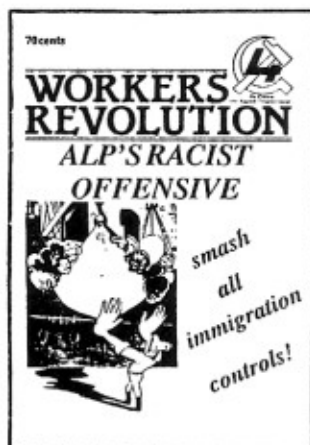
In a recent issue of its paper, the British group Workers Power protested its exclusion from the conference. The complaint is justified, since the Budapest affair was advertised as an open meeting. The WI’s reply (*The International*, July) only sidestepped this charge.

Workers Power also griped that while we “state capitalists” were invited, they – defenders of the “workers’ states” like the WRP – were kept out. Here Workers Power invokes the underlying affinity of the “deformed workers’ state” family, a view we have often claimed that they hold despite their customary denials. Nevertheless, Workers Power pointed to a certain reality.

The WRP and Preparatory Committee *had* been moving toward positions that undermine orthodoxy and defensism. At the London conference, there were still gusts of empty orthodox rhetoric, but these did not overwhelm the discussion. WRP leaders took positions on fundamental questions far to the left of the other so-called Trotskyists, including Workers Power. What attracted us to discuss with them was not their traditionalist affirmation that capitalism was decadent and counterrevolutionary but their apparent concern to explore its real dynamics.

Likewise, the WRP’s insistence that Stalinism too was counterrevolutionary, along with its openness to examining the development of Trotsky’s analysis, had the potential of transcending the orthodoxist analysis of Stalinism. Despite the WRP’s denial that the Stalinist states are capitalist, at least in theory it refuses to accept the common notion on today’s far left that Stalinism, and “left” capitalists in general, have progressive features. Thus it seemed possible for the new WRP to avoid the deathtrap of popular frontism that ensnared virtually all wings of the post-World War II left, including the IC. Drawing the line between centrists who regularly commute across the class line and revolutionaries who remain steadfast for proletarian independence is a central task of Trotskyism.

Unfortunately, the WRP’s “Stalinism is thoroughly counterrevolutionary” formula appears in practice to be as



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much a form of demonology and conspiracy theory as of Leninist instincts. We will show some specifics below.

Stalinism's impact on the workers' movement everywhere has indeed been consistently counterrevolutionary. For over half a century it was the decisive force in maintaining world capitalism. Within the workers movement it was the mainstay of popular frontism. Its corruption of the Fourth International led every wing of Trotskyism into adaptations. Today more than ever, absolute vigilance on the class line is vital, or the Fourth International will never be re-created.

In Budapest we did not expect a repeat of the London debate. We did imagine that the conference would work to apply some theoretical analysis of capitalism and Stalinism to crystallize a revolutionary program, strategy and tactics. As we said in our last issue, "Given its history, we approach discussion and practical collaboration with the WRP with some vigilance. But ... the importance of re-creating the Fourth International requires exploring such avenues when they open up."

### A TENDENCY IN SEARCH OF AUTHORITY

These hopes have been dimmed. Budapest showed that the WRP and the Preparatory Committee retreating to their disastrous post-Healy course.

Shortly after it emerged from the Healy nightmare in 1987, the WRP called for an "open international conference of all Trotskyists" to re-examine fundamental questions. But at the same time it was engaging in unprincipled maneuvers with Nahuel Moreno, the leader of the International Workers League (LIT), another notorious political adventurer. It was difficult to believe the WRP's sincerity when its press was defending Moreno's duplicity in Nicaragua and his popular frontist blocs in Argentina. In the name of open discussion it proposed marriage with the LIT while repelling dialogue with those not in the wedding party.

At that point the WRP looked to Moreno and the LIT, not only for big battalions to puff itself up once again, but also for theoretical and practical guidance. Moreno's forces were large in Latin America; they assumed his perspective must be correct. In this orientation the WRP ignored Moreno's history of chameleon politics and deceit (see *Proletarian Revolution* No. 29). It wasn't until the LIT brazenly offered to trade political positions for an organizational deal that the WRP recoiled. And the WRP press has yet to explain or retract its anti-Trotskyist defense of the LIT's maneuvers in Nicaragua.

Today the WRP is similarly looking to Balazs Nagy for political direction, if not numbers. Unlike Moreno, Nagy puts forward a generally left political line within the "orthodox Trotskyist" spectrum. But the problem of theory-as-cover still presents itself sharply.

In a pamphlet produced in 1988 and still promoted by the WRP, *For the Political Revolution in the USSR! In Defense of the Transitional Programme!*, Cde. Nagy denounces Gorbachev's perestroika as an attack on the working class. But then he gets down to the problem of applying his views to immediate events, which he never did at Budapest: how to relate to the Gorbachev-inspired reform movement?

"... when Gorbachev's bureaucrat-economist Aganbegyan says that 'the intention of perestroika is to proceed from administrative methods to a principally economic management' ... we cannot categorically deny the necessity of such a process and propose something else in its place. (What, for instance?) The 'revision of the planned economy' demanded by our program will also begin with this process!"

This is a call for a "workers' perestroika," a deep concession to Gorbachev's decentralizing, marketizing and privatizing program.

It is totally wrong to claim that there is no alternative other than bureaucratic control or market regulation – for that is what Aganbegyan's terms mean. Yes, Trotsky in the early 1930's called for a return to the NEP, as Nagy recalls. But then, as in the NEP of the 1920's, the bourgeoisie could be controlled by a centralized workers' state. Since then, and especially today, the Soviet economy has been subjected to so deep a decentralization that to speak of a planned economy is a bad joke. The immediate need for a resurgent working class movement would be to centralize the economy; whatever market methods are needed temporarily will be subordinate to that aim.

To say that Marxists *begin* with economic transformations of the same kind as Gorbachev is a grave error. It stems from not understanding that the bureaucracy is itself capitalist; it means not understanding that the essence of Gorbachev's program is the use of market mechanisms to discipline the working class and deepen its exploitation. It means in fact that Nagy's "workers' perestroika" is equivalent to calling for "workers' austerity."

Despite Cde. Nagy's rhetorical rejection of Stalinism, the hole in his theory – that the bureaucracy has been totally counterrevolutionary for over half a century but still is only a caste, not an exploiting class – leads him to make a grave capitulation to Gorbachev & Co. (As well, it shows how thunderous terminological denunciation can be used as cover for reformist practice.) Even though the widespread miners' strikes in the USSR in 1989 showed workers' hostility to the effects of perestroika, Nagy did not respond to our criticism of "workers' perestroika" at the conference. Nor has the WRP repudiated the notion in its press.

Of course, Nagy has not gone as far as many defensists, including Healy, who ended up endorsing Gorbachevism whole hog. But the lesser capitulations of far-left centrists are no less dangerous precisely because they confuse and mislead the most advanced working-class elements. Thus the failure of Nagy and the WRP to come to grips with our criticism is telling.

### THE QUESTION OF IMRE NAGY

The danger that defensism leads to softness toward Stalinism is reinforced by another side of the LRSH's politics. In a polemic against the Austrian RKL (*The International*, July 1990), Janos Borovi wrote:

**"We energetically refute this attempt to besmirch the record of Imre Nagy and his comrades. Certainly they were not Trotskyists, and we have never said they were. But they remained faithful to the working class and the workers' councils until the moment they were executed. When the time came to choose between loyalty to the Stalinist apparatus and loyalty to the workers' councils, they rejected any compromise with Kadar's counter-revolution."**

Imre Nagy was the leading reformist bureaucrat during the Hungarian revolution of 1956. He heroically opposed the counterrevolution and the Soviet invasion, for which he paid with his life. But it is not necessary to agree with the RKL's evaluation to see that he was a nationalist Stalinist dedicated to "socialism in one country" and in no way loyal to the working class or the workers' councils. We cite two standard left-wing accounts of the Hungarian revolution.

**"In the months preceding the revolution the stubborn loyalty of Imre Nagy, and most of the members of the reformist opposition, to the official procedures of the**

Communist Party had prevented them from acting independently and establishing any real contact with the working masses. Right up to and even during the revolution the main concern of the opposition had been to achieve political change at the top of the regime, not to assist in the activities and organization of working people at the base of society. The idea of workers' councils found no mention in Imre Nagy's writings, and had been only rarely considered even by the radical wing of the opposition." (Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, p. 170.)

"The Miskolc [workers'] Council was not opposed to Nagy. It even proposed him as First Minister of a new government. But that did not prevent it from doing the opposite of what Nagy wanted. When he begged the insurrectionaries to lay down their arms and go back to work, the Miskolc Council formed workers' militias, maintained and extended the strike and organized itself as a local government independent of the central power." (Andy Anderson, *Hungary 56*, p. 26.)

Imre Nagy's reformism made him an advocate of national unity, not class struggle. When workers took up arms, he called for order. When the counterrevolution struck, he appealed not to the workers of East Europe and the world but to the United Nations dominated by Western imperialism. And today his ideology is echoed by reformist CPers and others. For the LRSB to defend Imre Nagy as a partisan of the working class rather than nationalism is to mislead the revolutionary movement and pave the way for deep capitulations over the class line in practice. It is a concession that reflects the disastrous impact of Stalinism on the workers' movement.

#### THE WRP AND TROTSKYISM TODAY

Although it is still far to the left of most Soviet defensist tendencies, the WRP already shows evidence of softness towards "democratic" reformism and blurring of the class line. We cite the most obvious examples.

1. The WRP's *Workers Press* (January 27) described the Revolutionary Left in the Polish Socialist Party/Democratic Revolution as a current which "bases itself on the Fourth International" – without comment or criticism. But this group was at best Mandeliste, and the PPS/RD has an equivocal position toward the anti-working class CP-Solidarity coalition government (see *Proletarian Revolution* No. 36).

2. Another article in *Workers Press* (February 3) written by a correspondent in Czechoslovakia gave a glowing account of the Left Alternative, a formation hardly worth the name centrist. It is an umbrella group overlapping the ruling Civic Forum. Its best-known leader, the Mandeliste Petr Uhl, is also an official spokesman for the capitalist, pro-Western government of Vaclav Havel. The article even cites such facts, again without criticism or remedy.

Undoubtedly WRPer would attribute the lack of criticism to their desire to win elements of the Polish and Czechoslovak groups from Mandelism. But the failure to draw the class line openly and unambiguously teaches only class collaboration and denies Trotsky's insistence on "saying what is." The method is that of the opportunists in the Fourth Internationalist movement in the 1930's who argued against Trotsky's exposing Andres Nin and publicly condemning the POUM's betrayal of the Spanish workers.

3. *Workers Press* responded to the mid-June outbreak of violence in Romania by siding with the anti-regime demonstrators beaten up by the miners. While correctly pointing out that the reform-Stalinist Iliescu regime lied about the threat of a fascist coup, the article deliberately underplayed

the reactionary character of the opposition: "In Romania, it is Stalinism, represented by Iliescu – and not some mythical fascists – that is opening the door to exploitation by world imperialism." (June 23.)

Unfortunately fascism is no myth in Romania, as *Workers Press* admitted in a subsequent issue. And the oppositionists include numbers of ultra-reactionaries and staunch supporters of Western imperialism. Thus the WRP's rendering of Stalinism into demonism serves the cause of those who would restore open bourgeois exploitation. Iliescu &



*Romanian miners beating anti-government demonstrator. Miners came at President Iliescu's call but are ambivalent towards his regime. Fearful government aides were eager for militant workers to leave Bucharest.*

Co. are also returning Romania to market forms, but it is likewise true that they are being forced to give too many concessions to the workers for imperialism's taste.

4. In *Workers Press* of February 17 and 24, Cliff Slaughter replied to our criticisms of the WRP's work with its allied party in Namibia, the WRP/N, in the elections early this year (see *Proletarian Revolution* No. 36). In contrast to the bulk of the left, they did not support SWAPO, imperialism's junior partners in Namibia.

But the WRP/N joined the United Democratic Front, a petty-bourgeois umbrella, justifying this move mainly by the need to stop the Stalinist-influenced SWAPO. We predicted that the UDF would capitulate to de Klerk and SWAPO, and it did: its leader joined the new South Africa-backed regime. Cde. Slaughter defended the WRP/N's position but avoided our main point: Marxists oppose popular-front blocs. Slaughter's justification rested on the need to win over elements of the UDF – once again, an opportunist means that betrays a desirable end – plus the inexperience of the Namibian WRP. Inexperience, however, has to be treated with patience, not patronization.

The WRP might say that these articles were written by individuals, not the party as a whole, a practice which encourages "ferment." But it is one thing to allow a free and full airing of opinions in the press – and another to avoid taking a clear line, carrying it out and defending it in public. This allows the party leadership to shift like the wind in practice – a method different from Healy's arm-twisting but which breeds indiscipline and similarly stifles revolutionary consciousness. Such pluralism will lead either to overt



reformism or to a renewed party Bonapartism. That means the end – the failure – of “Healyism with a human face.”

### PARTY, PROGRAM AND THEORY

There is another way to build the party, the only way for an authentic Fourth International. A party needs a world view, a methodology and a practice which reflects its proletarian mission. It must distill its theoretical and practical conclusions into a program to define itself. Trotsky's Transitional Program was such a distillation in its time. It was never meant to be the orthodoxists' “finished program” (Jim Cannon's term); it was subject to change as history and further experience dictated.

No internationalist party can succeed unless it bases itself on working-class independence, socialist revolution and an updated Transitional Program. Vagueness about the “number” – that is, avoiding the term Fourth International – is the surface reflection of concessions over class methodology and program. We demonstrated this for Workers Power and the LRCI in our articles in *Proletarian Revolution* Nos. 32 and 33. The new Workers International has the same problem upside down. It is certain of the number 4 but is vague about its program. All experience – the Morenoites are only the latest example – shows the capitula-

tions that result from a cavalier attitude toward program and class independence.

At Budapest we put forward a concrete restatement of the Transitional Program for East Europe. We challenge the WI once again: do you agree with this program? If not, what is your alternative?

Working out a program requires an uncompromising devotion to theoretical exploration, fighting the class struggle on the level of theory. It means unremittingly testing your theory against the events of the class struggle so that practice, which is decisive, remains consistent and revolutionary. The party thus becomes the living embodiment of the most advanced proletarian class consciousness.

The proletarian party requires a leadership that reflects the working class's actual material interests. In our understanding of capitalism, the very workings of the system at critical conjunctures make this clear to the proletariat through its advanced layers. Building the party means developing this consciousness in action. It is not a theatrical event. The workers will come to the party not out of a sense of weakness because it looks big. Its growth in power and trust derive from its steadfast struggle for a program and practice which embody their real class interests. That is the only basis for re-creating the Fourth International. ■

## Theses on the East European Revolutions and the Transitional Program

*This document was submitted to the Budapest Conference on the Unity of Workers East and West by the League for the Revolutionary Party (USA) and Workers Revolution (Australia), April 1990*

1. Stalinist parties and governments have been overthrown across East Europe. The working classes were at the center of the revolutionary events, but state power has passed into the hands of reformist Stalinists, middle-class intellectuals and open bourgeois elements. As a result, the proletariat faces an even more monumental task: socialist revolutions to create authentic workers' states.

2. The provisional governments that have been set up to create “normal societies” are in reality agencies for consolidating capitalist institutions of power. The working classes must clearly counterpose their own organs of power (workers' councils, armed workers' militias) and must give no political support in any form to the post-Stalinist regimes or their elected “democratic” successors.

Workers of East Europe and the USSR already have shown their capacity for this task. In 1980 the workers of Gdansk in Poland created the Interfactory Strike Committees (MKS's), which took on some of the responsibilities of state power. In 1989 striking Soviet coal miners replaced the police with their own embryonic militias and established the principle that they could run their own communities.

3. Perestroika and the national austerity programs are aimed first and foremost at increasing the exploitation of the workers by subjecting them to the discipline of the market. Against the all-pervasive program of “decentralization,” the workers must defend nationalized property and the deformed proletarian gains which it embodies. For this the smashing of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist states is necessary. As the attempts to sell the Gdansk Shipyard prove, it is the workers and not the Stalinist bureaucracy who defend state property in the means of production.

4. The various United Lefts, Left Alternatives, etc.,

formed as coalitions of different left tendencies, are not the proletarian alternative. They stand for no clear program and therefore inevitably act as loyal oppositions to the post-Stalinist governments. Their advocacy of “self-management” feeds into the marketizing decentralization schemes of the bourgeois and bureaucratic forces. Likewise, there can no more be a “workers' perestroika” than there can be a workers' austerity. A hard polarization is necessary between all the recovery programs of the ruling bureaucracies and the proletarian program.

### TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS

5. A critical step for building revolutionary parties is the formulation of precise transitional demands. These substitute not for the socialist program of proletarian revolution but for the minimal program of reformism. Starting from the conditions and struggles of the workers under the existing regimes, they point to the need for a workers' state.

6. Given the severe crises of varying depth in different countries, communists need to raise a variety of economic demands. The *sliding scale of wages*, to mandate wage rises along with prices; the *sliding scale of hours*, to divide the necessary work equally and do away with mass unemployment; the *centralization of industry* as opposed to privatization, to maintain and expand essential industries and services; *expropriation* of vital privatized firms without compensation, including those owned by foreign corporations; *public works* to employ the unemployed; *open the books* of private and state firms so that workers can themselves determine the profitability and “efficiency” of their workplaces; *workers' control* (supervision) of production, to keep close tabs on the state and private bosses.

7. The class instruments for achieving these goals are *workers' councils (soviets)* and *workers' militias*. These are the organs of power in an authentic workers' state.

Communists defend the organization of independent trade unions, but this form of working-class united front is

not the same as the revolutionary united front embodied in genuine soviets. (The founding of Solidarnosc in 1981, for example, was a retreat from the achievement of the MKS's.) In revolutionary periods it is possible to build workers' institutions that point beyond reforms.

As well, given the present level of class collaboration and illusions in capitalism, including its electoralist traps, it is especially necessary to promote mass working-class self-activity, including the general strike.

8. It is critical to win the support of the peasants. Therefore in specific countries Marxists call for a *workers' and farmers' government* in the workers' state. Demanding the division of the land by the peasants may also be necessary in some countries. In others, worker-peasant control over genuinely collectivized agricultural units would be possible.

In Poland, where the Stalinist regime allowed small-peasant farming to predominate, the newly unleashed capitalist markets will wipe out many peasant holdings. Giant corporate farms aided by Western imperialist financing will increasingly dominate. Revolutionaries must defend the dispossessed peasants lest they remain tied to reactionaries like Cardinal Glemp and become tools of a fascist revival.

9. Workers must look to each other and to the workers of the USSR, not to the Western bosses, for support. Above all, the myth of solving the East German crisis by nationalist reunification must be fought. Now is an excellent time for the old Comintern slogan for voluntary federation of nations, the *Socialist United States of Europe*. Naturally communists assure German workers that a unified German workers' state is theirs to choose under such a federation.

10. To counter the poisons of racism and great-power nationalism, communists demand *self-determination for all oppressed nationalities and all rights for immigrant workers*.

11. To end the great-power threat that overshadows the Eastern revolutions, we raise the *abolition of the Warsaw Pact and the removal of Soviet troops from East Europe*. Even though they may be seen as a benevolent presence because of illusions in Gorbachev, these occupying armies will be used to crush working-class movements against the provisional governments, in the interests of Western imperialism as well as of the local ruling classes.

A parallel campaign in the West to *abolish NATO and remove U.S. forces from Europe* would help destroy the impact of imperialism and also puncture illusions in the West. The Western bourgeoisie will not support these demands, and those who want to end the Warsaw Pact will have to collaborate with anti-NATO movements, not the bourgeois governments, in the West.

12. A crucial demand to crack the masses' illusions in the beneficence of the Western powers is the *repudiation of the international debt to imperialism*. This is not the same as appealing to the Western bankers to postpone or even forgive their claims. It is meant to be disruptive of the international financial structure. The East European workers have no more obligation to pay for the misguided and corrupt deals incurred by their discredited rulers than do the workers and peasants of Latin America.

As the oppositional Polish workers' leader Andrzej Gwiazda has said, "We need a block of countries throughout the world to repudiate and refuse to pay this debt. We say that the people of Poland and Peru have the same struggle." A concerted campaign by revolutionary governments across East Europe to renounce their ex-rulers' debts would spread to other oppressed nations and would undermine the foundations of imperialist world domination.

## THEORETICAL MOTIVATION

13. That so many of the transitional demands necessary for East Europe today derive from the section of the Transitional Program dealing with social and economic demands for the capitalist countries confirms the analysis that the Stalinist countries are capitalist. The capitalist nature of Stalinism derives from the fundamental exploitation of the working classes through wage labor, despite the distorted economic and political forms apparent in these countries. The underlying reason for the distortions is the inability of the Stalinist ruling class to destroy all the gains achieved by the proletariat on the basis of the October revolution.

14. The changes in state power now taking place do not represent the "restoration" of capitalism; they are political revolutions within capitalism, changes in regime that preserve the underlying class relations of exploitation. Except for special formations like the Stasi and the Securitate, the apparatuses of repression are also fundamentally unchanged. The very possibility of the peaceful achievement of openly bourgeois relations (now undeniably taking place in East Germany) proves for Marxists that the "democratic" revolutions now taking place are political, not social. The fact that the changes are accompanied by the self-bourgeoisification of elements of the parasitic ruling bureaucracy shows that there is no class difference between the state capitalist exploiters and "private" capitalist exploiters.

15. "Defensism" has long been a critical dividing line among organizations regarding themselves as Trotskyists. Now practical collaboration among groups with different positions on the "Russian question" is increasingly possible, because of the East European revolutions and the weakened Western military threat against the Stalinist states. The practical task today is not to "defend the Soviet Union" but to defend nationalized property from the combined attack by the imperialists, the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy, and to defend the revived working-class struggles from the "stabilization" efforts of the Soviet military and NATO.

16. Despite the lack of immediacy of defensism, it remains absolutely necessary to clarify the theoretical foundations of Trotskyism. Marxists must learn from the momentous events of the day and show the way forward. Thus any notion of Stalinism as a revolutionary substitute for the proletariat in the struggle for socialism — a notion implicit in the theory of "deformed workers' states" — must be expunged from the arsenal of Trotskyism, where it was placed by the historical betrayers of our movement. Stalinism has been unambiguously counterrevolutionary for half a century; it has no "dual nature" and plays no dual role.

17. As a step toward re-creating the Fourth International, it is necessary to specify central, practical tests as a basis for organizational collaboration. In the immediate period the most critical demands concerning East Europe are "No support to the provisional governments," "Abolish the Warsaw Pact" and "Repudiate the imperialist debt." These slogans sharply cut through the new rulers' pretensions to democracy and expose their subservience to the bourgeois exploiters. They also distinguish reformist forces from those with any claims to a revolutionary program.

18. The re-creation of Trotskyist parties in East Europe is the most important task in these countries. They would counterpose a hard working-class solution to the deepening crisis, the only realistic alternative to the growing threat of fascism. Revolutionary proletarian parties are the only antidote to the poison of the "soft left" that is really the left wing of perestroika and bourgeois forms of exploitation. ■



# LEFT JABS

## STATE POWER MISSING, OWNER UNKNOWN

The French Lutte Ouvrière group holds that the USSR is still a workers' state, although the other Stalinist states modeled after it are bourgeois. This contradictory notion would take some twisting to defend, if LO ever tried. But why bother?

"The fact is that there seems to be little left of state power in the Soviet Union, particularly since the Communist Party has been officially sidelined or discredited. ... The army, which remains officially silent, does not seem to be taking sides in this disorder ... ." (*Class Struggle*, May 1990.)

This comment appeared a few months after the Soviet army massacred civilians in Azerbaijan, and shortly before it slaughtered more in Armenia. The army is, of course, the embodiment of state power.

Perhaps LO is doing some wishful thinking. If you can't tell a workers' state from a capitalist state, then it doesn't matter much if there's really no state left to tell about.

## GOD'S WEEKLY WORLD?

Two selections from the *People's Daily World*, organ of the U.S. Communist Party (June 9):

"Standing behind a Stanford University podium, Mikhail Gorbachev preached a kind of sermon on the mount about the future relations of nations and therefore the future of mankind.

"The vision will be familiar to those who have heard sermons based on Ecclesiastes 2:4. 'They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ...

"Is the world ready to hear this from its politicians as well as its spiritual leaders? ... Judging by the enthusiastic reception for Gorbachev, it is more than willing; it is impatient."

And:

"Today's issue of the *People's Daily World* is the first one in our new weekly format. ... As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions on how to make this a better paper, including whether or not we should change the name, and to what, since we're now a weekly."

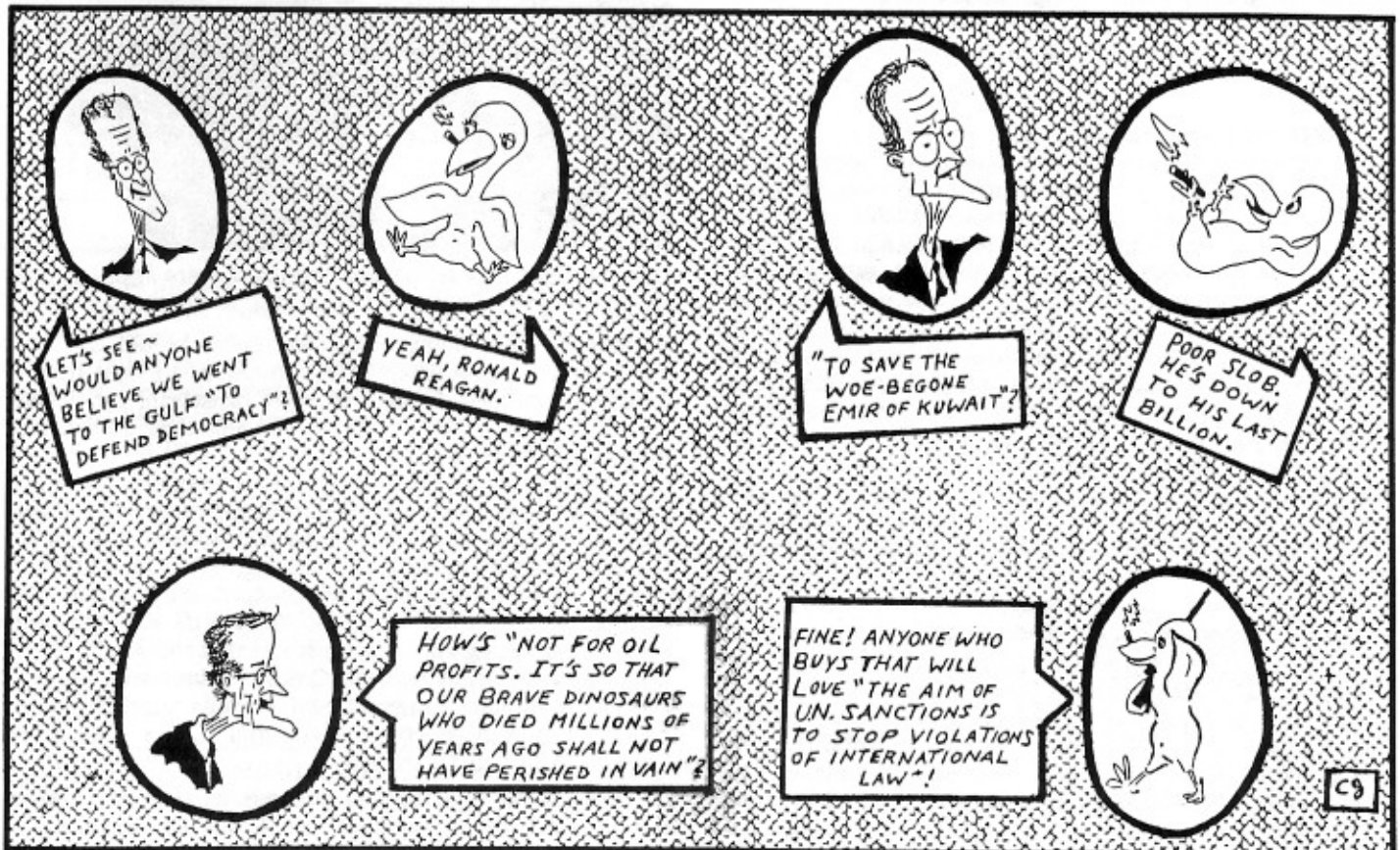
Well, first of all we'd like to read more about all the plowshares and pruning hooks being sent to the citizens of Soviet Armenia and Azerbaijan. And as for the paper's name, we suggest not changing it at all. Calling a weekly a daily is about right for a paper that labels tyranny and backwardness "socialism" and Gorbachev the second coming of Christ.

## FULL CIRCLE

From the *Militant*, June 22:

"Greetings were received [at the SWP's national convention] from the Central Committee of the Workers Party of Korea, the governing party in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The convention delegates also sent a message of solidarity to the Workers Party."

The SWP is the organizational descendant of the first Trotskyists who broke from Stalinism. The SWP's embrace of the Korean Stalinists was accompanied by its break from the United Secretariat, which at least still claims to be Trotskyist. A fitting recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of Leon Trotsky's murder at Stalin's hands.



# CCNY Protests Racist Levin, Imperialist Powell

We reprint below two leaflets issued by the LRP last spring at City College (CCNY) in New York. Both deal with issues that shook the campus: racist statements made by a philosophy professor, Michael Levin, and the administration's award of an honorary degree to George Bush's highest military official, General Colin Powell.

The protest discussed by the second leaflet was successful: as the campaign against him grew, Powell discovered a pressing commitment with NATO to keep him away from the CCNY award ceremonies. Lucky thing for him: the anti-Powell movement was prepared with banners and placards, and even though their target was absent, his name was roundly booed when the award was announced.

## What to Do about Levin

The attention of the CCNY campus and the world has been drawn to the racist views of Professor Michael Levin. Rightly so, since (contrary to the opinions expressed by some), Levin is not just an insignificant jerk. He is an academic point-man for the racist attacks increasing on campuses and throughout the U.S. He and his ideas are dangerous and have to be dealt with.

Long known for his pseudo-scientific arguments that blacks are inherently less intelligent and more criminal than whites, Levin most recently proposed apartheid for the New York subway system. "It seems reasonable," he wrote, to "requir[e] black males to ride in special police-patrolled subway cars before and after school hours."

This echoes his letter in the *New York Times* a few years ago defending the "right" of store owners to slam their doors on blacks. Coming on the heels of the Howard Beach racial murder, Levin's letter could only be taken as a justification of the white thugs' attack on blacks walking in their neighborhood. In general, his "logic" provides a pseudo-scientific sanction for indiscriminate violence against black youth.

### PSEUDO-SCIENTIFIC RACISM

Levin cites I.Q. statistics to back up his assertion that blacks are less intelligent than whites. I.Q. tests, however, measure chiefly access to information available to middle class people. (Levin himself illustrates that high I.Q. is no guarantee of intelligence.) Early uses of I.Q. testing in the U.S. were openly racist: to discriminate against blacks, Jews and other immigrants. Now only the openness is gone.

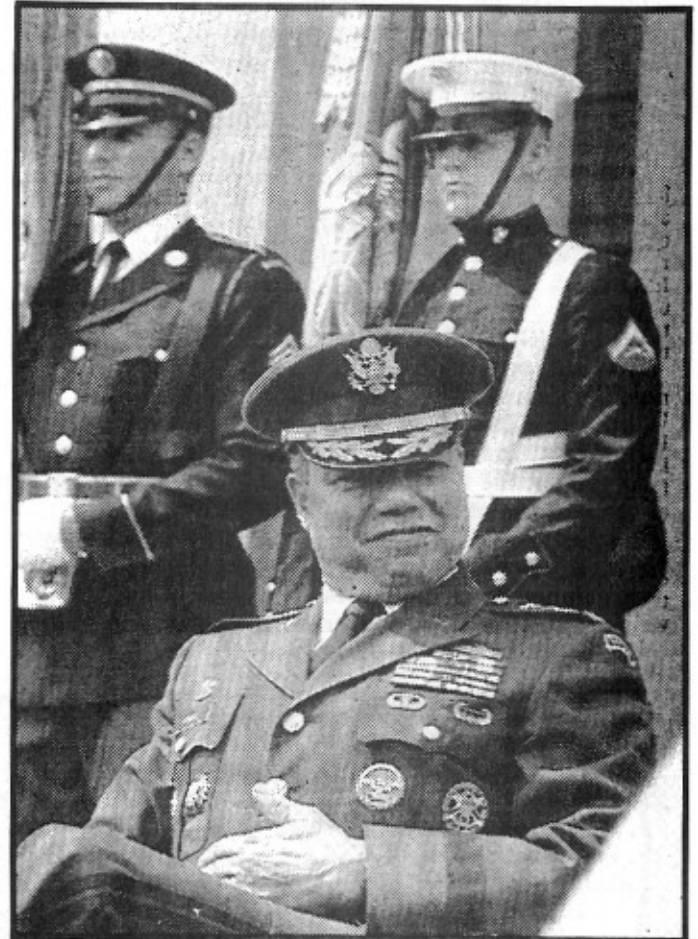
Levin uses his figures to attack affirmative action programs that attempt to combat racial bias. These programs can be criticized for not really offsetting discrimination — but Levin's aim is the opposite. He reasons that because of their lower "intelligence," blacks deserve to be at the bottom of society. The argument is familiar. "Because blacks are inferior to whites, they are fit only to be slaves." "Because Jews, Gypsies and Slavs are inferior to Aryans, they should be exterminated." One wonders when Dr. Levin is going to follow in the "scientific" footsteps of Dr. Mengele (who no doubt also had a high I.Q.).

### THE JEFFRIES DIVERSION

Lately the case of black studies Professor Leonard Jeffries has been used to diffuse the outrage against at Levin's racism. While Jeffries also has a pseudo-scientific view of racial superiority (and has made anti-Jewish remarks), Jeffries and Levin are not equatable. There were many Jews

in Nazi Germany who concluded that all Germans were monsters, but that chauvinism by the victims of oppression was not equivalent to the chauvinism of their persecutors. Why don't "fair-minded people" today who know the extent of racism in America see the difference between a Jeffries and a Levin? The answer is that, consciously or unconsciously, their social vision is clouded by that same racism.

It is not accidental that racism is growing at the same time that working-class living standards — including access



General Colin Powell, whose ancestors were imperialism's victims, now victimizes other people of color.

to college — are being devastated. It is the old capitalist game of divide and conquer. A movement to fight back is desperately needed. Levin and other racists are the enemy. The danger of a Jeffries is that he misleads and divides those who should be united.

One way to fight back at CCNY is to organize to drive Levin off campus. We are not interested in having the college administration fire him. The history of McCarthyism shows that breaking teachers' job rights will do far more harm to outspoken opponents of racism and reaction. The case of Professor Dube at SUNY/Stony Brook, who was fired for criticizing Zionism, indicates that the danger is not just historical. And a City College administration that chooses to honor General Colin Powell, the architect of George Bush's massacre of black and Latino civilians in Panama, is not to be trusted.

Instead of appealing to the administration, students should show their contempt for Levin by organizing a



boycott of his classes. All students must be made aware of his racist theories and proposals. Mass disruption of his classes would be a fitting response.■

## To Honor Colin Powell Is to Honor Imperialism

Awarding an honorary degree to General Colin Powell is a slap in the face to the students of City College and to all people opposed to racism and U.S. imperialism.

General Powell, George Bush's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Ronald Reagan's last National Security Adviser, was the principal architect of the brutal and racist invasion of Panama in December and the continuing occupation of that country. He is responsible for the slaughter of thousands of civilians by U.S. tanks and bombers and the destruction of the homes of another 50,000 poor and working-class people.

The Panama invasion was no "Just Cause" justified by Manuel Noriega's drug-dealing and tyranny. For years Noriega had been supplied and encouraged by the CIA, with Bush in charge. Bush turned against his old pal only after Panama stopped aiding the Nicaraguan contras, a challenge to U.S. domination of the hemisphere. General Powell supplied the imperialist rationale: "We have to put a shingle outside our door saying *superpower lives here.*" Under the Bush/Powell doctrine, no Latin American or Caribbean country has any right to defy the will of the United States.

### POWELL PRACTICES WHAT LEVIN PREACHES

The award to Powell by City College, with its black president and largely African-American and Latin student body, is an outrage. Powell carried out on the black and Latino people of Panama the murderous apartheid policies that City College's own racist Professor Levin advocates for Harlem. The College's award endorses the "might makes right" policy of U.S. foreign relations. It will be used to show the world that even the oppressed minorities in the

U.S. support imperialism.

On top of that, Colin Powell, the U.S.'s highest military official, is a defender of the monster "defense" budget. With capitalism facing a severe economic crisis, the ruling class is determined to slash public services like education, housing and health care while beefing up its armed power. So Powell insists that U.S. forces have to straddle the globe and that the U.S. nuclear arsenal has to be strengthened. For City College to honor Powell at a time of wholesale budget cuts amounts to cutting the throats of the working-class people the College is supposedly dedicated to.

### A ROLE MODEL FOR BETRAYAL

Why then is City College honoring him? Powell is an African-American whom the ruling class admires as a role model for African-American and Latin youth. He proves that people of color can get ahead in this country — if they sell themselves to U.S. imperialism as policemen for its third-world empire. When the stepped-up cutbacks and rising costs at the City University force more students to abandon their college education, then Powell's example is there for them to follow. Perhaps the College administration also feels that groveling before the Pentagon will win more military funding for its research programs.

The award to Powell is a cynical attempt to bolster the image of U.S. imperialism at a time when it is under attack across the world, from the Philippines to Central America to South Africa. The angry protest against him shows that imperialism is under constant challenge even at home.

The broadest united struggle is necessary — including above all the mass organizations of working people. But it cannot remain at the level of responding to an endless series of insults and atrocities by the ruling class. We, the exploited people of color and the whole working class, have to build our own weapon to destroy imperialism once and for all. That means a proletarian revolutionary party based on the scientific understanding of Marxism and Leninism. Today, with all forms of fake socialism collapsing on every continent, that can only be an authentic Trotskyist party.■

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## Class War

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*continued from page 2*

general were plagued by the absence of any policy of taking on the scabs. The bureaucrats at best left them isolated, confining their "unity" efforts to minimal, face-saving support rallies that failed to mobilize even their full staffs, much less the ranks of other unions, for *action*. And despite occasional bleats, they insisted on obedience to the letter of the bourgeois laws that are choking the unions to death.

Betrayal by the union bureaucrats is old hat. What's new is that the bosses are getting hurt too, some badly. Even where they have won, the owners suffered heavy losses. At Eastern there has been mutual destruction by workers and bosses; the airline has been wrecked and Lorenzo ousted by his own creditors. Greyhound is facing mounting debts: all agree it miscalculated in trying to smash the Amalgamated Transit Union. All workers enjoy seeing these creeps getting a dose of their own medicine.

The strikes we have cited are reminders that a wholesale defeat of the proletariat will not come easy. Most big capitalists have been aware of the working class's potential

power; it is the labor bureaucrats and their hired intellectuals who have prattled about the workers' weakness and the unavoidability of concessions.

### WORKING-CLASS POWER

American capitalism fought the Korean and Vietnam wars by trying to provide "guns and butter"; it avoided demanding heavy sacrifices from the workers. Ronald Reagan and his crew tried to get the bosses to screw up their courage by smashing PATCO a decade ago. But despite the helpful capitulation of the top union bureaucrats, an all-out assault on labor did not result. The bosses were aware that the working class remains a formidable force.

Unfortunately, the divisive and defeatist strategies of the union officials have left the workers feeling powerless to roll back the attacks. And even though it has been less than what capital wants, they have taken a bite out of working-class living standards in the past twenty years.

Now an international working-class upsurge is unfolding, in response to outbreaks of the general capitalist crisis. In East Europe and South America, workers have rebelled against austerity programs imposed under the gun of immense international debts. In the U.S., the owners of corporations like Eastern also incurred enormous takeover debts with plans of squeezing more profits out of the

workers. They were led to turn the screws too tightly, and they failed. But the trend is bound to continue, because the capitalists have little choice.

The workers will sooner or later come to see that they have to defeat the sellout bureaucracy and build a new leadership. Here the role of revolutionary Marxists is crucial. We do not create workers' anger against the bosses or their need to fight. We seek instead to prepare a revolutionary party committed to the interests of the working class for the class struggles that inevitably will occur. We work to

guide the spontaneous strength of our class into a conscious weapon aimed at taking power from capitalism.

In contrast to reformist leftists who tell workers they're winning, whatever the true state of affairs, or simply cheerlead strikes by chanting "fight harder," we put forward a definite strategy. Workers' feeling of powerlessness can be overcome only through a massive united action — a general strike against the capitalist attacks.

When this happens, the working class will be able to do a lot more than bring the bastards down with us.■

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## Racism

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*continued from page 2*

them are turned into abettors of the lynch mobs.

Dinkins' apologists say he didn't start the cutbacks and is not responsible for them, yet his austerity budget serves only the interests of the capitalists. Forcing racial and ethnic groups into a life-and-death struggle over crumbs is what crisis-ridden capitalism is about. Dinkins didn't create

to "patriotic" anti-foreigner chauvinism. Those who infect the black struggle with anti-Asian chauvinism only serve the capitalist class, which thrives on racism and patriotism.

On the other hand, the champions of "racial harmony" hailed in the racist media for crossing the picket lines are no heroes. They are tools of those who would "end racism" by sweeping it under the rug.

The lack of an alternative anti-capitalist leadership giving guidance to the fight against racism allows phonies like Carson and Al Sharpton (a former police informer) to put themselves at the head. Despite his history of opportunism,



*Demonstrators outside Brooklyn court demand guilty verdict for Bensonhurst murderers.*

the problem, but his phony racial harmony line only makes things worse. The ruling class needs "peacemakers" like him to prevent the development of a mass movement against racism and injustice.

Even racism's victims are turned against one another by this degenerate system. A case in point is the boycott of a Korean grocery store in Brooklyn stemming from an incident where a black woman says she was physically attacked by the employees. The grocers claim she attacked them after being caught shoplifting.

While a boycott against a business for racist practices is legitimate, this campaign bears unmistakable signs of its own racism and is not supportable. Boycott leaders around Sonny Carson and many picketers have made anti-Korean statements and would clearly like to drive Korean merchants out of black neighborhoods; they deliberately appeal

Sharpton maintains support as one of the few visible leaders expressing outrage over the attacks on blacks. The system Dinkins defends spawns the separatist feelings these opportunists feed on. They are two sides of the same coin.

### THE WORKING-CLASS ALTERNATIVE

Dinkins' plea for peace assumes blacks can expect nothing better than the status quo. But that really means accepting the escalation of their victimization under capitalism. In this Dinkins is joined by the labor bureaucrats, who always subordinate workers' needs to those of capitalism. Their refusal to fight for the unity of all workers and oppressed through class struggle allows the capitalists to carry out their racist policies unchallenged.

The Carsons and Sharptons, who sound more radical, also accept capitalism and its divide-and-conquer methods.



They demand a better deal for blacks, without challenging the roots of the system. They have no interest in protests against merchants (not to speak of bigger capitalists) on class grounds. But without a working-class struggle against racism and all the capitalist attacks, the situation will only grow worse. Until the working class organizes itself to take social power, we will see neither peace nor justice.

There are many "practical" leftists who insist that all

## Middle East

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the U.S., which has a far larger and deadlier chemical, biological and nuclear arsenal. The American people are being set up to accept the mass murder of Arabs, the blood sacrifice of their own youth and even the use of nuclear weapons in the desert battlefields.

### IRAQ'S NATIONALIST APPEAL

Iraq emerged from its bloody eight-year war with Iran in deep trouble. With imperialist backing, Saddam had attempted to crush Khomeini to dampen the revolutionary wave in the Middle East. He also grabbed a piece of Iran and aspired to dominate the Gulf oil region by weakening his only serious rival.

Bled dry by the war, the Iraqi and Iranian regimes desperately needed to increase their oil revenues. Inside OPEC they both pressured Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates to restrict production and raise prices. Having failed to smash Iran, Saddam again seeks to champion Arab nationalism against Israel and the West. Just as Khomeini channeled the smoldering social revolution into Islamic fundamentalism in order to serve Iranian capital, the Iraqi dictator turns the workers' and peasants' hatred of imperialism toward pan-Arab nationalism — to satisfy Baghdad's bourgeois aims.

Ousting the oil-rich neo-colonial Kuwaiti royal family promotes both his economic and political goals. The West's intervention also serves him well, making him the hero of pan-Arab unity despite a brutal record so often in the service of imperialism itself.

### THE NEW IMPERIALIST WORLD ORDER

The imperialist response reflects deep causes inherent in the decay of world capitalism. Cautiously edging his way toward a new imperialist world order through a thicket of economic woes, Bush seized the opportunity to reassert the American Empire. One result of the USSR's collapse is popular pressure to curtail military spending. Saddam's adventure reminded the U.S. bourgeoisie of their need for increased armed vigilance. As Bush often puts it, the enemy now is "instability and unpredictability" — that is, the uncontrolled masses.

The Soviet retreat brings into the open the underlying rivalry among the Western powers and Japan. In the absence of the old balance of power that uneasily maintained world order and kept their contentions within limits, the Northern powers are groping for ways to preserve their joint dominance through a united front against disobedient nationalists. Even though the U.S. is no longer economically hegemonic, all the powers see the need to prop up its leadership.

So when Bush sounded the alarm in the Gulf, they all lined up behind him. The West's new dependents in Mos-

cow and Beijing also fell into place. Even "revolutionary" Cuba declined to vote against U.N. sanctions and the U.S.-led naval blockade. And given the overtly reactionary nature of the Kuwaiti and Saudi regimes, the show of force had to be undertaken without any smoke screen of lies about defending democracy.

### A LINE DRAWN IN SAND?

Bush's "line" across the Arabian desert is not just a warning to ex-colonial nationalists to cut the crap about boosting their share of oil profits. Imperialism is stating its intention to take a bigger cut for itself. The speed and unanimity of the U.N. sanctions and the Western military moves showed the capitalists' universal awareness that their



*London: Kuwaiti demonstrators with portraits of Emir. Bloodsuckers everywhere were saddened by his ouster.*

economy stands on a precipice and can tolerate no jostling.

A fresh lesson also had to be taught to complacent neo-colonial compradores like the Saudis. These regimes are too weak to crush the threat of mass discontent; they will now have to "welcome" an open and prolonged imperialist presence. The periods of nationalist independence and even the covert neo-colonialism that succeeded it are over.

On the other hand, the new order bolsters imperialism's regional junior partner, Israel. Boasting of their early warnings of the danger posed by Saddam, the Zionist rulers

would like to crush the Palestinian *intifada* under the Western military umbrella. That, however, could be the spark that touches off the Middle Eastern Arab masses, who are already outraged at the West's crying over Kuwait while Israel has sat for decades on conquered Arab lands.

Bush's line in the desert could prove to be drawn in sand or blood. The inherent conflicts within imperialism will eventually break into the open, especially if the situation stalemates without resolution. The Arab compradores are running a heavy risk, given their vulnerability to a pan-Arab and anti-imperialist appeal. As well, popular support in the U.S. will inevitably fall from its initial highs, once the prolonged risk to American soldiers and the true reasons for Bush's war-mongering sink in.

The real war danger comes not from any Arab "madman" but from George Bush. Iraq's present strategy is to appear reasonable and call for negotiations. Saddam cannot surrender Kuwait without getting some face-saving concession. He would like to back down but Bush won't let him. When the U.S. shot across the bows of its tankers, Iraq replied with restraint. Saddam's "human shield" of hostages, decried by one and all, is at best a temporary deterrent.

Whether Bush wants open war or not, his up-the-ante tactics make it quite possible. He would like to see Saddam knocked off by his own military but would accept this regime if it were properly housebroken. If a stalemate weakens imperialism's bloc, then a "surgical" strike would be in order. Bush's options, not Saddam's, threaten all-out war.

#### THE IMPERIALIST CABAL

Predictably, practically all Republicans and Democrats, liberals and mainstream conservatives jumped on the imperial bandwagon. (For their own reasons, some far-right reactionaries are cool to Bush's intervention.) The differences are only over how far to go. One bourgeois faction fears that the consensus is shaky; therefore Bush should reach an

accommodation that puts Saddam in his place. The alternative line is to smash Iraq now before the support fades.

No one should expect the establishment "left" to stand up against imperialism. Some, like Jesse Jackson and the Rev. William Sloane Coffin, endorsed Bush's moves to quarantine Iraq. Other "peace" figures like George McGovern and the Rev. Joseph Lowery called for using the U.N. to give Bush the cover of legality and world endorsement.

The universal capitalist cabal is not defending cheap oil or the living standards of ordinary people. The big stake is the imperialist prerogative to rule the world unchallenged. Those like Jackson who back the current action but deplored the invasions of Grenada and Panama are first-order hypocrites. The aim of all these interventions, as with Britain's war against Argentina over the Malvinas (Falkland) islands, was global order and stability. Only now the threat to profits is closer to the bone.

Further left, an emerging anti-intervention coalition around Ramsey Clark does demand the unconditional withdrawal of U.S. forces — but also urges "peaceful diplomatic efforts to end the Gulf crisis." This amounts to a backhanded endorsement of the role of the U.N., which is increasingly in the U.S.'s pocket. Negotiations between Iraq and the U.N.-U.S., given the balance of forces, would mean an imperialist-imposed settlement under military pressure. The call for diplomacy comes down to a soft landing on the imperial side.

This is not enough for right-wing pacifist outfits like the War Resisters League, which calls for U.S. withdrawal along with "U.N. imposition of strong multi-lateral economic sanctions" against countries that violate non-intervention and non-violence — in effect, the U.S. propaganda line versus Iraq. (The WRL imagines that "strong" means something other than military enforcement.) Along with the Quakers' American Friends' Service Committee, the WRL explicitly commended Bush for organizing economic sanc-

## On Oil Price-Gouging

Amid the imperialist war-mongering, politicians are also denouncing the oil industry for unfairly raising prices to consumers. Such populist rhetoric is a concession to the underlying mass distrust, if not yet hatred, of Big Oil for gouging the public. But the target is too narrow. It is the system as a whole, not just the oil giants, that is exploiting us. "Price-gouging" is not just cheating; it is the way capitalism works.

The fact is that the value of all commodities, including oil, is based not on what they once cost but on the cost of reproducing them. As Karl Marx explained, this is the material reality behind the bourgeois economists' law of supply and demand. Oil from the Middle East is cheaper to produce than oil from elsewhere. So when the supply from the Gulf is reduced, the average price on the world market rises. On top of this, the oil sellers take advantage of uncertainty and need to squeeze out more.

Why is the supply from the Middle East reduced? The immediate cause is the U.S.-U.N. embargo of Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil. Bush & Co., who claim to be fighting to prevent Saddam Hussein from imposing high prices if he succeeds in monopolizing Gulf oil, in reality are driving costs upward.

High prices may even be an unstated U.S. goal. A few years back, George Bush as vice-president went to Saudi

Arabia to beg for a cutback in oil production in order to raise prices and boost American oil profits. Today the issue is not high prices versus low but who controls: "our" monopoly or Saddam's? That is what Bush is fighting for.

Over a decade ago, facing a previous oil crisis, Jimmy Carter proposed raising oil prices in order to make investment in new energy sources profitable. (See "Oil, Coal and the Energy Program," *Socialist Voice* No. 6.) But since then, because of the underlying weakness of capitalism, little capital has gone to such productive uses. The U.S. bourgeoisie is left holding few cards other than military power to protect its energy needs and its world position.

People who complain about oil prices are right: big capital grabs for profits when and however it can, and uses resources for waste and destruction rather than goods people need. But leftists who blame the greedy oil bosses alone are copping out. They suggest a futile reform of corrupt and decadent capitalism — when the only solution is to end the whole system. At the very least they should join in demanding that politicians who denounce Big Oil put their money where their mouth is and organize a government takeover. That would be a preview of the working class's alternative.

**U.S. IMPERIALISM OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST!  
EXPROPRIATE THE OIL COMPANIES!**





*U.S. troops prepare for chemical warfare in their defense of oil imperialism.*

tions! Pacifism "prevents war" by giving aid and comfort to imperialism's war preparations.

The social-democratic *In These Times* (August 29) criticized Bush's militarism as "overkill" but applauded the U.N.'s actions to maintain the proper pecking order of the imperial world:

"Hussein's move flouts international law and order at a time when the former superpowers are losing influence over their one-time clients. Recognizing the dangers inherent in this situation, the major powers quickly came together in the United Nations to give near unanimous approval of an embargo on Iraq. For the first time since the U.N.'s founding in 1945, East and West acted decisively to impose sanctions on an aggressor nation.

"So far, so good."

Thus international stability (and "law and order," no less) are given as a justification by a "left" paper for superpower domination of its victims. With such enemies imperialism doesn't need friends.

#### REVOLUTIONARY TASKS

As the capitalist economy founders, great power rivalries inevitably intensify. Racial anti-foreign chauvinism in the U.S. reflects not only the growing conflict with Japan but also capitalism's need to repress the masses of the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. It also serves to turn white working people against blacks and Latins at home. In the present tension, a firm line must be drawn by the working class against all signs of anti-Arab racism.

Working-class revolutionaries everywhere have the combined task of mobilizing opinion against imperialism's inter-

vention and its local collaborators, while at the same time explaining the impossibility of giving any political support or credence to Saddam Hussein. There is no reason to support the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait, since it was not done in the interest of the people no matter what rhetoric is adopted. There is even less cause to favor the restoration of Kuwait's "legitimate" autocratic rulers; Kuwait is more an imperialist enclave than a nation. If war breaks out, we stand for the defeat of the imperialist forces and therefore for the military defense of Iraq.

Some on the left object to such a defense out of justified hatred for Saddam. But as with Khomeini, Noriega and the Argentine generals, when all the world's imperialists band together against a lesser gangster, it is not his crimes against the people they object to. They're fighting for the right to commit their own crimes unchallenged. Their real enemy is the masses' anti-imperialist struggles.

Exposing Saddam will be especially difficult in the Middle East if he is pressed to the wall and is forced to call on the Arab masses to revolt against their rulers and the West. Such a call is not likely: Saddam is a bourgeois nationalist looking for a better deal, not a revolutionary seeking to bring down imperialism in the Middle East. But since at the moment there is no proletarian party or international to lead a mass upsurge to revolutionary conclusions, it is not excluded that he would run the risk as a last resort.

Even if Saddam has no such intention, a shooting war between the U.S. and Iraq could provoke an upheaval. The masses' response in fact is the only deterrent to war now. The real answer is socialist revolution to overthrow all the regimes for whom the working masses are no better than cannon fodder in their global struggle for profits. ■

# Nicaraguan Workers on the Move

The Sandinistas' electoral defeat by the U.S.-backed UNO coalition was a setback for the Nicaraguan masses. But this "great victory for democracy" has not heralded a mass surrender to imperialism as advertised; rather it has encouraged the very revitalization of the workers' and peasants' struggle it was intended to suppress.

From the start, the workers and peasants saw the UNO victory as an invitation to battle. Many unions elected new, more militant leaderships. During the transition months between the February elections and Violeta Chamorro's inauguration in April, there were more than a dozen militant strikes. President Daniel Ortega at the time criticized the walkouts in a national broadcast, calling for "stability." René Bonilla, a leading member of the Sandinista Workers Central (CST) in the telephone workers' strike, voiced a popular opinion in labeling Ortega "too conciliatory" toward the Chamorro government.

Since Ortega left office, there have been two mass strikes — with barricades and fighting in the streets reminiscent of the working-class struggle that toppled Somoza in 1979. Warning against the specter of civil war, both Chamorro and Ortega turned the call for stability into a permanent motto. But stability is the one thing ruled out in Nicaragua. The masses have already guaranteed that.

## SANDINISTAS TURN LEFT

The Sandinistas' response to the election debacle was a turn toward the ranks. It had to be: their class nature as a petty-bourgeois leadership forces them to shift between working-class and bourgeois forces, but their power derives from their ability to speak for the masses. The election results showed them the danger of losing this base.

The defeated Sandinistas called for democratization and let loose a cascade of self-criticism for having taken their popular base for granted. They began to discover and praise the "independent" and critical role of the unions in the struggle. But in power the Sandinistas had spent years telling workers not to strike and to sacrifice to pacify the imperialists and local capitalists.

Expressing the new line, Edgardo Garcia, leader of the Sandinista Association of Rural Workers, explained: "A government that has no economic blockade or military aggression to confront is a government with more obligations towards workers." (*Guardian*, March 28). Such openings from the leadership, undoubtedly played a large part in gearing up the workers to fight.

Ortega's outgoing government granted big wage increases to workers and froze the continual devaluation of the Nicaraguan currency. These measures, contrary to Sandinista policy when in office, were an obvious maneuver. Chamorro came in and quickly devalued the currency by 50%, and real wages collapsed once again.

The workers' first response was the six-day strike in May called by the National Confederation of Public Employees, described graphically by David Dye in the June 6 *In These Times*:

**"Within days government ministries were occupied; banking, bus and telephone services were disrupted; the airport and traffic into and out of the country were**

**paralyzed. To the dismay of the government, the Sandinista police showed themselves unwilling to use force to dislodge the strikers."**

Ending the strike was controversial among the ranks. "The Sandinista unions clearly could have held out for their 200 percent demand, but they opted instead for an implicit pact with the government to 'concert' future wage and other economic policies. Though not all workers were happy with the decision to hold back, it reflected a large political dilemma."

The dilemma derived from the Sandinistas' predicament as Bonapartists, forever trying to balance between irreconcilable class forces.

**"Party leaders know that after 11 years in power their seemingly strong union base is shaky and subject to raiding. Nicaragua's workers may be apprehensive over what the new administration's policies will do to them, but some also remember how the Sandinista Workers Central (CST), with official backing, muscled its way into control of offices and workplaces and then forced workers to accept years of revolutionary austerity."**

Now opposition unions are already outbidding the Sandinistas on wage issues. If the Sandinista leaders didn't try to keep up with the workers' demands, their base would deteriorate further.

## SECOND STRIKE STEPS UP DEMANDS

On the other hand, the Sandinistas still have to caution workers not to push the capitalist framework so hard that it collapses. They don't openly cheerlead for capitalist exploitation. Rather they point to the danger of imperialist intervention as the reason for conservatism. Thus Bayardo Arce said after the May strike:

**"If the Sandinista Front deployed all its forces, it could paralyze the country. But to what purpose? The government resigns, and then what? If they send not only for AID but also for the Marines...?"**

However, the threat of U.S. intervention doesn't carry the same weight as before. It didn't prevent the workers from engaging in a second, even more powerful general strike from June 27 to July 12. This strike included public employees, teachers, health workers, some factory workers and farm workers. In addition to shutting down banks and telephone offices as in May, it hit the metal, sugar, textile, beer, coffee and construction industries. While the first strike had demanded higher wages and job security, the second also called for repealing new laws allowing reprivatization of state farms, rehiring fired workers, ending layoffs, government subsidies for construction companies facing bankruptcy and financing of other state-owned industries.

With the deepening political nature and participation in the second strike, there was also an ominous escalation of violence against workers. In July, strikers and their supporters were attacked by mobs of right-wing unionists and strikebreakers at various sites; some were killed and injured. Explaining the negotiated settlement which was rushed through on July 12, José Bermudez, the public employees' union chief, stated:



"Nicaragua is a powder keg. We had to find a solution quickly. Our rank and file was desperate. The strikers occupying workplaces began asking for weapons to defend themselves from armed strikebreakers. The situation was getting complicated." (*Guardian*, August 1.)

#### THE TWO-FACED SANDINISTA ARMY

The workers, given their revolutionary history, are quick to demand arms. In the past they accepted a certain degree of self-disarmament in the belief that the Sandinista army and police were all that was needed. Now the FSLN has to foster the idea that their forces represent the workers — at the same time they also represent Chamorro's govern-

ment. The general view on the left, that solidarity with the masses, not with the petty-bourgeois FSLN leadership, is the key to consistent anti-imperialism. We now have every right to ask: what were U.S. leftists fighting for when they proclaimed their "solidarity" with the FSLN? Whom do they sympathize with now, the victims or the police?

At a joint press conference with Chamorro to announce the deal ending the July strike, Army chief Humberto Ortega proclaimed again that his forces would "never violate the constitution or stage a coup, much less one against the government of Doña Violeta. But neither will we ever open fire on our own people."

A description of the July strike scene in the FSLN's *Barricada Internacional* (August 11) showed the illusions

Nicaraguan police tear-gas striking workers. Sandinista leader Tomás Borge praised cops' "professionalism" and claimed they cried too. "Progressives," choose your side!



ment! As a Sandinista resolution from the June 17 Assembly at El Crucero stated:

"The transition protocol makes the development of a democratic process possible and stipulates the conservation and integrity of the military institutions created by Sandinism. These should not be partisan in character and are under the obligation to subordinate themselves to the government within the legal framework, but right now their own patriotic and popular training is the best guarantee against their being used as tools with which to repress the people." (*Barricada*, July 14.)

Commending the "professionalism" of the Sandinista army during the May strike, FSLN leader Tomás Borge commented:

"It is a national army, because it is loyal to the country, to the law and to its commanders, independent of the political sympathies of the majority of those who make up its forces ... I know very well that when they threw tear gas, perhaps unnecessarily, the victims cried due to the effect of the gas, but the police also cried for different reasons, behind their masks." (*Guardian*, August 15.)

Over the past decade the LRP has argued against the

which workers retain in the Sandinistas — as well as the tension between the FSLN and the workers' position.

"Ten years of revolution are not to be sneezed at, and even the Sandinistas were surprised at the magnitude of the protest. I myself saw Col. Hugo Torres, guerrilla commander and second-in-command to Eden Pastora in the attack on the National Palace in August 1978, arguing with people at the barricades during the strike; explaining to them the need to ease tensions in order to open the door to dialogue with the government; asking them to understand the army's difficult position. He was heard and heeded."

The pro-Sandinista press generally issued false reports stating there were "no clashes" with the strikers in the recent actions. In reality, although the militia were undoubtedly restrained compared to the usual police attacks on strikers, they followed orders to dismantle the workers' barricades. In fact, on July 9 Chamorro threatened to use the army and police to evict strikers from occupied buildings. Workers' barricades on the major highway to the Managua airport, which had been particularly effective, were later removed by bulldozers driven by Sandinista army and police.

Daniel Ortega had also issued a statement from the FSLN leadership. It called on

**“all political and social forces in the nation to reestablish calm, reject provocation and avoid the use of physical violence. ... We call on the people to not carry out actions that prevent the unrestricted transit of citizens and the carrying out of their peaceful activities.”**  
(*Militant*, July 20.)

Obviously a call to the workers to dismantle their barricades, this was cited by the Nicaragua Solidarity Network and other left writers as Ortega's statement of “support” to the strikers!

As well, on at least one occasion Sandinista police tear-gassed a group of striking workers. But more critical is what they didn't do. In a situation where scabs, including contras, were attacking workers (and while rightist Vice President Godoy threatened to build “national salvation committees” to confront the strikers), a policy of “impartiality” actually aids the attackers.

That the Sandinista army and its top leaders — the armed power that defends the state — could even half-heartedly transfer their allegiance to the new rulers shows the common class nature of the allies, despite their different policies.

### UNIONS SETTLE

Arguing that it was necessary to make a deal with Chamorro to avert Godoy's threats, the unions settled for a 43 percent wage increase for the month of July, with no future increases included. Other promises of the settlement, such as slowing down the pace of reprivatizing agriculture and providing job security, have already been betrayed.

As with the May strike settlement, Sandinista leaders stated that the only alternative to this deal was civil war — an alternative that they now vehemently reject, even though that was how they got into power in the first place. Instead, they counterpose a plan to regain power through the 1996 elections. In this they stand with reformists everywhere who counterpose electoralism to mass action.

But this electoral scheme is particularly hollow. As we pointed out in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 35, no matter who won the elections, there would have been pressure toward a coalition government with UNO to propitiate U.S. imperialism. In reality, the FSLN is behaving as if it were in a coalition government now. Not only do its armed forces pledge allegiance to UNO, but it has already combined with one faction of UNO in order to choose the presiding officers of the National Assembly.

Such collaboration is not new, since Sandinista governments in the past had contained bourgeois leaders, including Violeta Chamorro and several others who later joined the contras and are now in UNO. In the past it was the openly bourgeois partners who broke with the Sandinistas, not the other way around.

### THE ROAD AHEAD

Nicaragua will not remain at a standstill for six years. This ramshackle coalition didn't even have its own furniture in place before it initiated a massive assault on the workers and peasants. If it is to last its full term, the government can only move to the right. To build up a capitalist economy, it must push its economic program. And to back that up, it must build up not only the contra “development poles” but an internal army of terror to supplant the dubiously loyal Sandinista forces.

The Sandinistas' return to office would give the working people no alternative to Chamorro. In fact, the Cha-

morro program is simply the extension of what the Sandinistas were already doing. This is proved in the analysis presented by Carlos Vilas in the usually pro-Sandinista *NACLA Report on the Americas* (June 1990). On the drastic “adjustment program” advanced by the FSLN to combat hyperinflation in its last years in office, Vilas wrote:

**“The adverse effects included a severe slump in productivity, lack of liquidity, and further deterioration of social services. Nearly 35% of the population was unemployed. The shrinkage of consumption, the rising debt burden on the peasantry, and the plummeting of wages — all normal effects of such strategies — followed on years of negative economic developments for the poor. Real wages fell from an index of 29.2 in February 1988 to 6.5 in June 1989 and to 1 by December.”**

The Sandinistas opposed strikes during their reign on the grounds that they helped the contras — the mirror opposite of UNO's accusations against the strikers now. Were their attacks on the workers' organizations fundamentally different from Chamorro's? As Vilas notes, when construction and automotive workers struck for higher wages in 1988, the government set the police on them. When teachers and health workers called for higher pay, Ortega said no and later opposed a strike in the education sector. As well, “When production cooperatives — which represent 50% of industrial employment and 21% of production — protested exorbitant interest rates, the Ministry of Finance responded that unless they adjusted to the new policy, many of the cooperatives would irremediably disappear.”

With all the noise the Sandinistas have made of late about defending state farms, their policy in office was hardly pro-peasant, favoring the wealthy large private farmers. Vilas notes:

**“As the economic crisis worsened, subsidies to middle-class and wealthy entrepreneurs were increasingly financed by cutting back the consumption, income, and living conditions of the revolution's natural base of support, the workers and peasants. Physical rationing of basic commodities, which guaranteed access for everybody, was eliminated in favor of market rationing by making prices affordable only to the richest and plunging peasants into debt.”**

As well, during the election campaign, the FSLN candidates “floated the possibility of rescinding land expropriations under the agrarian reform, and offered renewed guarantees to private property and foreign investment” — exactly what they attack Chamorro for doing now.

### THE LOYAL OPPOSITION

Given their history as defenders of capitalism against the workers and peasants while in power, it is no surprise that the defeated Sandinista leadership now adopts the role of a loyal opposition to the pro-capitalist government. More and more the FSLN will warn the working class movement to block with “Violeta” against the greater evil of the extreme right. Then they will openly oppose workers' struggles, whose continuation is inevitable.

The Sandinistas out of power remain the petty-bourgeois tendency they were as nationalist rulers. But their balancing act will lean more and more toward Chamorro, who in turn will lean more and more to the right. The ranks will not only continue to fight against UNO attacks but will have to move against FSLN capitulations too.

The rejuvenation of struggles in the unions will force splits among both the FSLN directorate and the pro-Sandinista ranks. Given the Sandinista's domination of the workers' organizations, in the absence of an alternative



leadership, left-wing splits within the Sandinista's nationalist spectrum will be extremely important. They may be able to win the loyalty of radically-moving workers for a time.

But a more left-wing nationalism will provide no answer. The danger of imperialist intervention is used by the Sandinistas to hold back the ranks and cover their own reformism. The danger is very real, but never in history has

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## Mandela

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*continued from page 32*

to create a tighter apparatus to enforce the oppressive labor system established earlier in the century. If South African capitalism chose repression over reform in 1948, what is the basis for reform in the 1990's? International and domestic economic crises make economic conditions far less favorable now. There is little surplus from which the ruling class can offer material reforms to the black masses. In fact, if it is to survive, South African capital will have to take away the economic gains already won by blacks. But today the working class is better organized, more powerful — and therefore more dangerous.

The problem for the rulers is to grant political concessions and also to bolster their fragile economic structure.

imperialism been blunted by conciliationism. Defeating the enemy requires building a proletarian revolutionary party with a conscious policy of promoting international socialist revolution. The birth of a genuine proletarian internationalist current in Nicaragua, so long overdue, will be advanced by the waves of class struggle and political differentiation in Nicaragua this year.■

And so, dressing himself in democratic clothing, this racist wolf advocates "freedom of choice" and rails against "domination by a majority" and "racialism." To the ANC's call for "one person, one vote," de Klerk replies with "group rights": white veto power over a future government's decisions.

### PRESSURE FROM THE WORKING CLASS

The ANC is also under pressure to negotiate. During the 1984-86 upsurge, its leaders called on the masses to make South Africa "ungovernable." But it was forced to retreat from this line by the harsh state of emergency. Then, seeing that the regime was not about to make huge concessions, the ANC began to replace its rhetoric of "total victory" with more openly reformist goals. Emphasis turned to the sanctions campaign and the alliance with white liberals through the United Democratic Front (UDF).

The ANC's growing reliance on Western support is one



*New Yorkers cheer Nelson Mandela as hero of anti-apartheid struggle. South African black workers' revolution will transcend Mandela's conciliationism.*

Thus, while appearing to dismantle apartheid, de Klerk is in reality making adaptations in order to defend superexploitation and sub-imperialism on new terrain. He needs a deal with the ANC to dampen the mass struggle and convince international capital that South Africa is both safe and profitable for investment. His task is not eased by the fact that South African capitalists are already moving their own capital abroad. Some black faces in government would also allow ostensibly anti-apartheid African states to make their economic ties to Pretoria more overt and thereby allow more effective South African exploitation.

source of pressure. Its "Frontline" allies are suffering economically and seek a resolution that would permit closer ties with South Africa. Further, the collapse of Stalinism in Europe and Gorbachev's effort to defuse the Cold War has led to Soviet demands that its friends, including the ANC and other African leaderships, make peace with Western imperialism and its friends — above all South Africa. The semi-colonial "independence" granted to Namibia shows what they have in mind. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 36.)

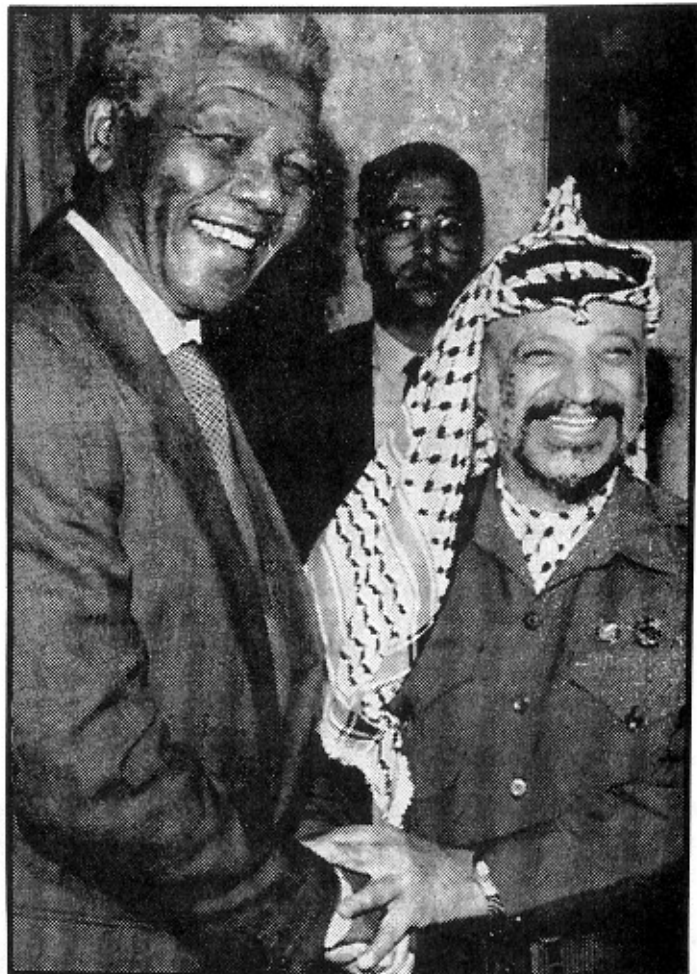
But the greatest factor behind the negotiations is the rise of the black proletariat as the leading fighter against

apartheid during the 1980's. Because of the state of emergency, the ANC found itself in the uncomfortable position of relying on the trade unions to lead the resistance. So it intervened in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) with the aim of subordinating the class struggle to the interests of petty-bourgeois nationalism. Pressure was applied to drop talk of socialism and the "Workers' Charter" (see *Proletarian Revolution* No. 33); COSATU adopted the ANC's Freedom Charter. More recently, using their influence in COSATU, the nationalists undermined efforts to launch a serious campaign against the anti-union Labor Relations Act (LRA) by channeling the unions' energies into support for the Mass Democratic Movement.

If de Klerk turns to Mandela to put a lid on the working-class struggle, Mandela in turn needs negotiations to win something for the black masses if the ANC is to maintain its hegemony over the struggle.

#### WHAT ABOUT NATIONALIZATION?

"Progressives" claim that Mandela's embrace of Joe



*Mandela embraces Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian intifada one day, their oppressor Israel the next.*

### Mandela's Narrow Nationalism

Nelson Mandela came to the U.S. not to bury capitalism but to praise it. His primary slogan, "keep the pressure on," reflected the ANC's focus on sanctions by imperialist governments and banks. He consistently declined to criticize the U.S. government. He repeated his support for armed struggle — but made clear it would not be used in South Africa as long as that "man of integrity," de Klerk, continued to negotiate.

His standpoint was always nationalism, not internationalism. Reporters pressed him about his backing of fellow nationalists Yasser Arafat, Fidel Castro and Muammar Qaddafi, that terrible trio of American demonology. But while he embraced Arafat, he then appeased the Zionist establishment by endorsing Israel and its leaders, the imperialist guardsmen who keep the Palestinians enchained. He applauded Castro and Qaddafi for backing the South African struggle but ignored the inconvenient fact that his imperialist hosts have invaded, bombed and are constantly threatening their countries.

Mandela had no problem endorsing imperialist policies elsewhere as a tradeoff for material aid to his cause. He endorsed U.S. intervention in East Europe and, most disgracefully, in Nicaragua:

**"We don't think that there can be any compromise as far as this is concerned. The social system of the West is based on the democratic principle. And you have said, for example, in regard to the troubles that are taking place in Eastern Europe that you want to render any assistance to them. You won't invest, you won't give them loans unless they conduct democratic elections. And you're quite correct. You have said so as far as Nicaragua, and Nicaragua had to comply with that."** (*New York Times*, June 22.)

In reality, as Mandela well knows, the U.S. imposed its "democratic principle" on Nicaragua by waging a multi-year war on the people of that country, identical in essence to the criminal war against blacks waged by the South African regime with U.S. backing. The U.S. ruling class rarely gets such applause from freedom fighters for its hypocrisy.

Slovo and the SACP shows how far left the ANC is. But in reality the ANC-SACP alliance rests on the fact that the seemingly socialist and working-class CP has proved that it will use its class credentials to discipline the proletariat with even greater firmness than the ANC — in the interest of a new "democratic" stage of capitalism. While the ANC and SACP claim to reject the discredited Stalinism of East Europe, they are moving in the same direction of relying on integration with Western imperialism.

A clear indication of the ANC's willingness to deal at the expense of the masses is its shift on nationalization. Because the Freedom Charter includes the call for nationalizing industries and mines, it allowed leftists to assert that the ANC stood for socialism. But in its 1988 Constitutional Guidelines, the ANC called for a mixed economy, making clear its commitment to capitalism in South Africa.

While Mandela upon his release repeated the Freedom Charter's call for nationalizations, he has since backed away. In an address to South African business leaders, he stressed the need for business and his movement to "cooperate."

**"Today I am not going to present any argument about nationalization. I would however like to share a secret with you. The view that the only words in the economic vocabulary that the ANC knows are nationalization and redistribution is mistaken. There are many issues we shall have to consider as we discuss the question of the democratization and deracialization of economic power."** (*The Militant*, June 22.)



These are weasel words. "Democratization and deracialization of economic power" is another way of calling for a kinder and gentler capitalism. It offers the lie that capitalism's oppression can be removed by softer policies by benevolent leaders. Mandela stands not for ending exploitation but for preserving it by making it more responsive.

"We are very conscious of the critical importance of such matters as the confidence in the future of both the national and the international business communities and investors. We accept that both these sectors are very important to the process of the further development of our economy.

"We can, therefore, have no desire to go out of our way to bash them and to undermine or weaken their confidence in the safety of their property and the assurance of a fair return on their investment. But we believe that they too must be sensitive to the fact that any democratic government will have to respond to the justified popular concern about the grossly unequal distribution of economic power."

#### U.S. WANTS ANC AS PARTNER

The ANC's shift on nationalization is an important part of its negotiations strategy. On the one hand, Mandela wants to play the nationalization card as a bargaining chip for further concessions from de Klerk — and because he must keep up support among the workers. On the other hand, the ANC's reliance on international bourgeois backing forces it to distance itself from nationalization.

This is part of an overall effort by the ANC to recast its revolutionary image to one of a democratic force for civil rights. Whereas in the past the U.S. would not deal with Communist-backed forces, the USSR's worldwide retreat has persuaded the Bush Administration to accept the ANC as a partner in negotiations and future governments. Mandela hopes to use the prospect of international investment and aid to get South African business to bargain.

"For us to be able to persuade the world that it must invest in South Africa, that it must extend aid to us, that it should agree on a Marshall aid plan, we must be able to report to the nations that white minority domination is no more."

#### BOSSES NOT WORKERS' FRIENDS

But it will take more than ANC approval of a new government to guarantee the return of investment to South Africa. Mandela's vision of cooperation with the ruling class faces a major hurdle, the black workers, who see nationalization and "one person, one vote" as essential components of a transformed South Africa. After years of bitter and violent struggles to build unions, workers don't recognize even the liberal capitalists as their friends. They will not easily forget the mass shootings, firings, and beatings that continue to this day whenever workers fight for better conditions. The masses' goal of prosperity and equality with whites is incompatible with the needs of Mandela's negotiating partners, de Klerk and imperialism, for higher profits.

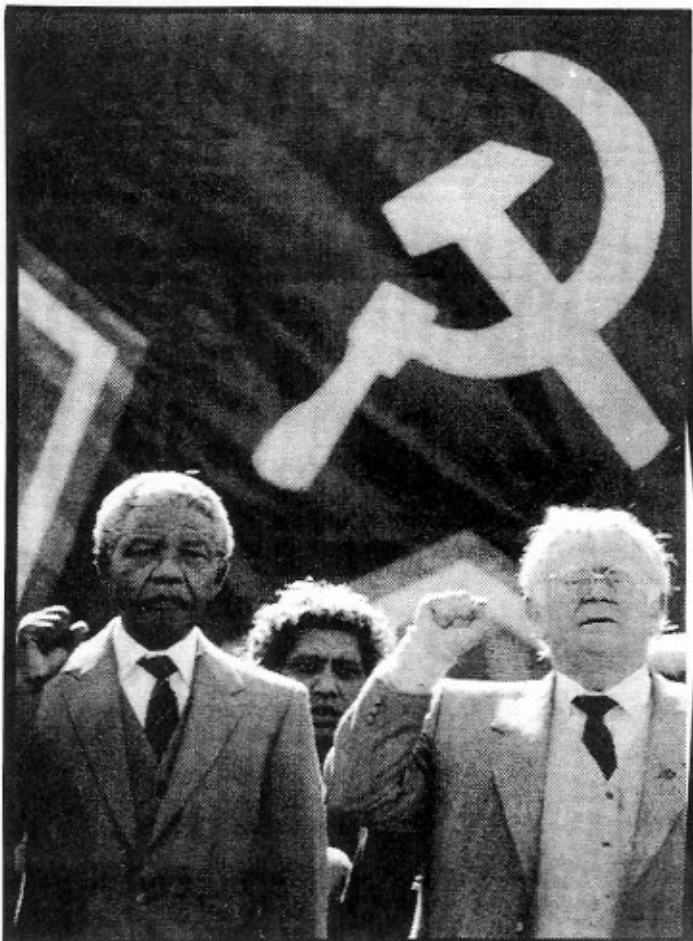
What can the negotiations yield? Mandela has spoken of "the possibility of a future coalition between the ANC and the National Party in government." The ANC would have to be "flexible over fundamental issues — even minority rights." (*Weekly Mail*, February 16-22, cited in *The International*, July 1990.) There are also reports of discussions between the regime's and the ANC's military leaders over integrating their forces in a "united defense force." Such reports fit in with steps already taken in Namibia. The

combined army would be the backbone of a capitalist state reorganized with black faces that continues to superexploit the black workers.

#### ANC, UNIONS LIMIT MASS STRUGGLES

Despite repression, the trade union struggle continues. In the first part of 1990, strikes ran four times ahead of the 1989 rate. While de Klerk talks of negotiations with the ANC, his regime's response to workers' struggles is the iron fist. Scores have been killed and injured in strikes since talk of negotiations began. And the strikes are increasingly isolated and lack political leadership from COSATU.

In Natal, where COSATU militants have for years fought pitched battles with the armed thugs of Inkatha, in which over 3000 people have been killed, the ANC's strategy is to end mass mobilizations in favor of negotiations with Buthelezi. Mandela took a conciliatory tone, calling for



*Serving capitalism: Nelson Mandela with Stalinist leader Joe Slovo. South African Communist Party's Hammer and Sickle, once the flag of those who fought, is now the emblem of those who've been bought.*

"national unity." In a 1989 letter to Buthelezi, despite Inkatha's systematic thuggery, he claimed he lacked information to "blame any of the parties involved in the deplorable conflicts now taking place in Natal." (*Inqaba Ya Basebenzi*, January 1990.) His call for the workers of Natal to disarm when they knew that Inkatha would never surrender its guns was a major factor in undercutting the mass euphoria he won when he was released from prison.

The ANC's Constitutional Guidelines include the proposal that "The institution of hereditary rulers and chiefs shall be transformed to serve the interests of the people ..."

That chiefs like Buthelezi who have served the apartheid state will somehow be transformed to "serve the interests of the people" is reactionary garbage. No doubt some ANC supporters will defend this approach on pragmatic grounds, but in reality it shows that the ANC is ready to accept the bantustans in some form. While this is a capitulation to de Klerk's "group rights" solution, the ANC has long had a history of accepting racial divisions, as shown by its original encouragement of the Zulu-based Inkatha.

Most COSATU leaders have capitulated to the negotiations mood. Leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) have met with government figures to discuss industrial relations and political issues. Through the negotiations process, the unions are being incorporated into the state apparatus in order to discipline the working class.

Perhaps even more damaging has been the capitulation of the left in the unions. The left syndicalists, led by the leadership of the Metalworkers Union (NUMSA), had once

raised the Workers' Charter as a series of democratic and social demands. But they have also limited the union struggle to rearguard actions to reduce the degree of exploitation. The left syndicalists, having failed to fight for a workers' party, have now fallen into the role of a loyal opposition that criticizes the ANC's open bourgeois line without counterposing a socialist alternative.

#### DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM

The recent upheavals in East Europe have been fought under the banner of democracy. Imperialism has achieved a democratic facade in Namibia — for the moment, at least. Doing the same in South Africa is all the more necessary for preserving imperialist interests throughout the region.

In South Africa as in East Europe, the turn away from outright repression disguises the rulers' plans to resolve the crisis by squeezing the workers. "Democracy" really means co-opting the proletariat in order to carry out an austerity

## Mayekiso's Misleadership

The bankruptcy of the left trade unionists is most clearly demonstrated by the turn of Moses Mayekiso, General Secretary of NUMSA, to Stalinism. Mayekiso had become well known through the international campaign against his arrest and trial for high treason. In the unions, he had been a leading critic of the ANC and the Freedom Charter. Calling the Freedom Charter a "capitalist document," Mayekiso attacked the Stalinist theory of two stages for the revolution against apartheid:

**"Through the shop steward councils people are opposed to this idea that there will be two stages towards liberation: that we must clean up capitalism first, then socialism. It's a waste of time, a waste of energy and a waste of people's blood." (*Proletarian Revolution* No. 31.)**

At that time he argued that because the South African economy was advanced, "the workers can take over and direct the whole thing." In a speech in Britain he stated that "A black capitalist government could be worse than the one we have now. Our fight is for socialism."

During our participation in the campaign to defend Mayekiso, we pointed to the correctness of many of the criticisms against the ANC. But we also pointed to the failure of Mayekiso and others to counterpose a political alternative to the ANC, a party and a program. The absence of a conscious fight for a revolutionary workers' party would inevitably mean accommodating to the petty-bourgeois nationalist strategy within the movement.

In our article "Trotskyism and the South African Revolution" (*Proletarian Revolution* No. 34), we again polemicized against the left unionists, warning against the danger posed by "their continuing pattern of adapting to ANC hegemony." Now it appears that the chickens are coming home to roost. Mayekiso, who had coupled his left criticisms of the ANC and the Stalinist line with the argument that it was premature to build a workers' party, now *is* for a party — the CP. He says:

**"The trade unions must participate fully in every aspect of what's happening politically and in alliance with progressive organizations. But we must do more**

**than concentrate on trade union affairs which deal with the struggle over wages and conditions. I believe we must strengthen the left political organizations.**

**"Personally I believe this can be done only through the South African Communist Party. We may have criticisms of this organization, but forming separate bodies would divide the South African working class. We need to have socialist organization to put forward the workers' views in the political arena. That's an urgent necessity at the moment. The only way I can see this being done is through the SACP." (*Socialist Worker Review*, April 1990.)**

Mayekiso's move to the SACP reflects the disorientation of the left syndicalists in general. Having failed to fight for a political alternative for the working class, Mayekiso now argues that the SACP is the only working-class party available. In reality, the failure to begin building a workers' party earlier meant accepting that the struggle for workers' power was not on the agenda, despite impressively radical words to the contrary. Mayekiso was thereby led to the SACP's stagist line: first, a bourgeois-democratic revolution to end apartheid; socialism "later."

Mayekiso now argues that the unions must maintain their organizations to advance the struggle to socialism in the post-apartheid state.

**"Of course it's true that the greatest danger would be if we let our independent structures collapse — if we said, 'Now we have freedom there's no need to build up our independent strength.' It would be dangerous because one person one vote does not mean real freedom. Until we transform the whole economic structure, and unless we have economic control of wealth and production we won't be really free."**

But this is a left cover for stagism. It remains to be seen whether Mayekiso's defection to the SACP will be followed by others. Either way, it's a sad commentary on the trade union left that the SACP could position itself as the only serious political working-class force at a time when the ANC is dealing with the regime.



program. But in South Africa the workers have not suffered a defeat comparable to the smashing of the Polish movement in 1981. It was this defeat that allowed the desperate Stalinist rulers to cautiously proceed with their democratic reform attempts.

The South African ruling class has insufficient confidence in the ANC's ability to contain the workers. Hence its move to "democracy" is more hesitant and contradictory. It is no accident that Inkatha is openly used as a weapon to complement the ANC and the incorporative strategy. That Mandela has accepted a role for Inkatha in the negotiations shows that he too is aware of this factor.

to the masses. The unions now must be challenged to organize armed defense guards and a workers' militia.

De Klerk will not negotiate away political power; it must be fought for and won. Workers need to raise the democratic demand for a revolutionary Constituent Assembly to decide the future of the nation. Such a demand would expose the anti-democratic character of the Mandela-de Klerk negotiations, which seek a political resolution without the masses' intervention.

But even a Constituent Assembly fails to go beyond the limits of bourgeois democracy. The workers need their own state to create a society with proletarian democracy and real



*South African workers shout defiance of Buthelezi. They need guns, not lies, to fight Inkatha and de Klerk's police.*

The pending negotiations are a real danger for the working class. The "unity" line with South African business will eventually lead the ANC to call on workers to end their strikes for the good of the nation. With the prospect of an ANC role in government, the workers will be told to trust their leaders instead.

The Labor Relations Act has begun the unions' transformation into instruments of the state. More and more they are called upon to play the role of disciplining agents over the workers. As one activist complained, "Part of your job as an organizer is now to play policeman ... warning against wildcat action." (*International Socialism*, Spring 1990.) An ANC-de Klerk agreement will consolidate this development, especially as the ANC increases its union role.

Instead of meekly following the ANC's leadership while occasionally raising workers' demands, the unions must confront the apartheid state directly. The LRA cannot be smashed by isolated strikes or mass strikes limited to one day. What is needed is a general strike like the one in June 1988, when COSATU joined with the National Council of Trade Unions in a display of workers' power. A general strike at this time would challenge not only the regime but the ANC leadership as well. It would signal the unwillingness of the working class to permit deals at their expense.

The workers cannot afford to sit back and wait for Mandela to "unite" with Buthelezi. They must continue to mobilize and arm to smash the Inkatha thugs - as well as the right-wing white groups that victimize black workers. The ANC's announcement in August that it would cease the armed struggle is a capitulation that deepens the danger

freedom without exploitation. Hence communists must also advocate organizing workers' councils to fight for working-class interests, take state power and build a revolutionary workers' state. The workers' militia becomes doubly necessary as the military alternative to the regime's "united defense force." It is the way to win black fighters unwilling to defend a black-dappled racist capitalism back to the revolutionary side.

Above all, the struggle to defend the workers means creation of an authentic revolutionary workers' party, a section of a re-created Fourth International. The defeat and capitulation of the workerists in COSATU demonstrate the bankruptcy of confining the struggle to union militancy. All the excuses about waiting for the right moment to build the revolutionary party now reveal themselves as a cover for political concession to the petty-bourgeois labor bureaucrats and nationalists. There is no longer room for conciliation.

It is impossible to predict the exact pace of events in South Africa. All indications suggest that the negotiation process will be a long, drawn-out affair. In all likelihood the ANC will accept a deal far short of black majority rule. It may get some sort of "one person, one vote" formula, but that would come with qualifications that guarantee a white veto over any government that emerges.

In all this, the working class remains the wild card. Its continuing battles threaten to blow open the negotiations, which by their nature depend on suppressing class struggle. The black workers know from experience that class peace is a lie. What they need is a revolutionary Trotskyist party that will carry out the lessons of that experience. ■

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Fall 1990

## The Contradictions of Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela's triumphant tour through the U.S. in June gave visible testimony to the mass admiration for South Africa's liberation struggle. At the same time it reflected the contradictions of his position: although it was the mass struggle led by the black working class in South Africa which forced the white rulers to offer reforms and negotiations, Mandela's African National Congress bases its strategy on support from world imperialism.

The contradictions reached a crisis in August. Mandela announced the suspension of the ANC's nominal "armed struggle" against the apartheid regime — at the same time that the fascist Inkatha organization, led by tribal leader Buthelezi and backed by the regime's police, spread its mur-

This magazine has argued in the past that apartheid cannot be ended by reforms. Clearly significant elements can be dismantled. Today blacks can join trade unions. Pass laws have been repealed. Beaches, theaters, hotels and restaurants are formally desegregated, and blacks have greater freedom of movement. De Klerk has unbanned the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP), the Pan African Congress and other organizations. Mandela and hundreds more political prisoners have been released. De Klerk promises that more reforms are possible. But he also makes clear that the white bourgeoisie is not about to yield power.

For South African capitalism to eliminate apartheid (that is, allow black majority rule) would require exception-



### Defend ANC, SWAPO Victims!

In *Proletarian Revolution* No. 36, we reported on the international campaign initiated by Namibian militants last year to expose the atrocities committed by SWAPO security forces against brother and sister combatants in the 1980's. Since then, similar and equally shocking accounts have been published by former members of the South African ANC's armed force, Umkhonto we Sizwe. They detail detentions, tortures, and murders of ANC fighters in Angola by Umkhonto's security apparatus.

Despite growing evidence of the seriousness and reactionary nature of these crimes, the U.S. left has turned a deaf ear. We urge our readers to join us in supporting the ex-SWAPO and ex-ANC detainees in their call for a People's Inquiry into these crimes. We will send copies of the available documentation upon request.

derous attacks to working-class black townships near Johannesburg. Hundreds were killed, and radical elements outside the ANC and in its youth group sharply challenged Mandela's conciliationism.

#### CAN APARTHEID BE REFORMED?

In the U.S., millions of black working people identified strongly with Mandela, even though he refused to say a word about racism in this country. Despite his actual message of conservatism and accommodation to imperialism, they responded with pride and respect to a leader they *thought* to be a principled and intransigent revolutionary.

Mandela is a hero, jailed for years for holding intransigently to his anti-racist convictions. He is also a petty-bourgeois nationalist who believes that apartheid can be ended while preserving capitalism. His purpose here was to strengthen his hand in the upcoming talks with Prime Minister F.W. de Klerk. As Mandela and de Klerk jockey for position, a serious question is posed. Is black majority rule possible through negotiations and without revolution?

al circumstances, a last-ditch effort to ward off revolution. But the black middle class is far too weak to safeguard bourgeois property from the most powerful working class in Africa. Without apartheid's repressive apparatus, the *super*-exploitation of the black masses would not be viable and therefore, given its role in the world market, South African capitalism would be inherently unstable.

Too often apartheid is understood as an evil policy that was tacked on to normal capitalism in 1948. Indeed, de Klerk's reforms suggest a return to something like the pre-1948 situation. The essence of South African capitalism, however, before and after 1948, has been the repression and superexploitation of black labor by a tiny white ruling class tied hand and foot to international imperialism. South Africa is also a sub-imperialist power, enforcing the exploitation of neighboring black states for imperialism as a whole.

The formal adoption of apartheid laws was a response to the growing threat of the black workers. Apartheid had

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