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Populism vs. Working-Class Revolution

by Sy Landy

Life is never going to be the same again. The social and economic crisis, deeply embedded in capitalism, has already wreaked havoc with people's lives. The United States stands on the brink of momentous all-encompassing changes.

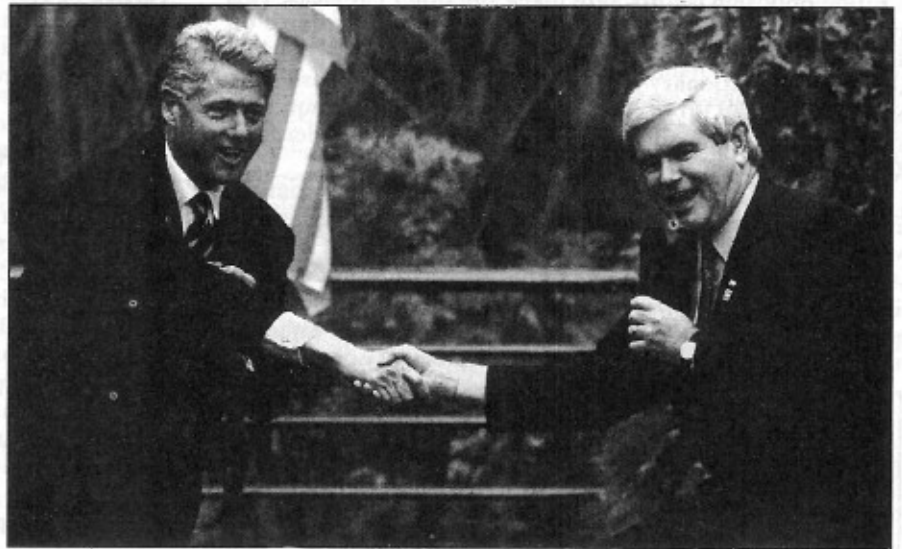
Most people, both those who have made a bearable living and those who are fighting to achieve it, retain the illusion that the post-World War II prosperity is the norm for American capitalism. But in reality, that time was an Indian Summer for a system already in its death throes. It can no longer tolerate the sops it once dribbled out to stave off working class upheavals.

Capitalism must go much further and return to pre-war conditions. Those were the days when the idea of a middle-class existence for workers was an absurd illusion, when racism was open and legal, when starvation was a constant threat for multitudes, when tuberculosis and other pestilences plagued the impoverished, when college was reserved for a handful, when employment was not only ill-paid but uncertain and insecure. Life for most working people was brutal, bitter and brief.

Increasing numbers in the U.S., the bastion of world imperialism, already live in such conditions. Most other workers live in fear they will lose their jobs, homes, medical care, pensions and hopes. Blacks and Latinos have been most

devastatingly hit but are hardly the only ones.

Masses are angry but at a loss as to where to turn. This condition plants the seeds of populism, as we show in this article. Most workers have not given up hope; they refuse to



Capitalist Attacks on Working Class: Slick Willie and Newt Shake On It

accept the fact that stark, unrelieved poverty is to be their reward for their hard work. However, that is our fate — that is, if capitalism is allowed to remain.

Of course, all the bourgeois pundits proclaim that class struggle and revolutionary communism have been proved dead as a result of the downfall of Stalinism. The truth is that the same socio-economic contradictions that devastated the Stalinist statified capitalist countries are also rampaging through the rest of the capitalist world.

THE 'CONTAINED DEPRESSION'

The struggles of the masses, now still restrained in the U.S. but starting to surge abroad, will break out in class revolts that will far outdo those of the past. And, precisely because the anger of the workers has been pent up for so long, the explosion here will be titanic. Anyone who thinks the current lack of class-conscious struggle is permanent understands little about the violent history and the capacity for sudden turns characteristic of the American working class.

continued on page 13

Inside

COFI/LRP Report	2
Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!	3
'War Zone' Battles and the Class War	19
Labor Notes Conference: Stressed Out in Detroit .	21
Corrections and Amplifications	22
ISO Polices the Left	23
Workers Power's Moribund Theory, Part 2	24
The Second Mexican Revolution	33
Liars Vanguard Strikes Again	39
New York: Mass Struggle Dissipated	40

South Africa: The Coming Showdown . . 3

COFI and LRP Report

CHICAGO

Much of the activity of the Chicago group is reported in the Illinois "War Zone," Labor Notes and ISO articles in this issue. LRP discussions are being planned in the Chicago area during the summer. Please write in if you are interested. Note that the address of the Chicago LRP has been changed. It is: POB 258235, Chicago, IL 60625.

NEW YORK

Our activity in New York has centered around the struggles against the budget cuts. We held forums at City College and other locations in New York on the revolutionary approach to these struggles. (See CUNY article, p. 40.)

As PR 48 reported, the Transport Workers Union in New York has also been hit by cuts, although their struggle has been kept successfully isolated so far. On April 8, the "opposition" New Directions caucus (ND) held a demonstration opposing layoffs, fare hikes and other cutbacks. This poorly attended rally heard endless ND speakers ramble on for hours without one specific proposal for action. But when a known revolutionary supporter of the LRP, a transit shop steward, stepped up to speak at the "open mike", a squad of New Directions marshalls descended upon him and declared the demonstration over prematurely.

Unfortunately, while ND was busy squelching communists, the bosses were organizing specific layoff plans, which were announced in June. In the light of a recent sick-out against layoffs staged by Long Island Railroad Workers, there is interest in job action among transit workers. Even ND is going so far as to talk of proposing a strike vote — although they have always failed to present a strategy of opposition to

concessions in the past.

The LRP is the only real opposition to the union bureaucracy. As part of our fight, we are pushing the message that a powerful transit strike can succeed — if it is waged as the spark for a united general strike against all the budget cuts.

In both New York and Chicago, we attended the May 6 rallies against the "Contract with America" organized by the Workers World Party (see p. 16.) In both cities the rallies were poorly attended aside from the middle-class left: they attracted no layer of the working class affected by the cuts.

One positive note in New York: the LRP joined in an effective bloc with a Haitian contingent protesting Clinton's racist policies (see PR 48), along with the RSG and a Puerto Rican nationalist group, to chant slogans denouncing both capitalist parties and calling for workers' revolution. LRP slogans for the rally included "Smash Racism through Socialist Revolution," "Democrats and Republicans: Two Parties of Racism, Austerity and Imperialism," and "Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class."

Please write in if you are interested in receiving sample leaflets or more details about our work.

AUSTRALIA

Our reporter in Australia describes the recently passed Federal Budget as a continuation of the Labor Party austerity. The notion that the Labor Party represents any alternative to the conservative Liberal Party is becoming more and more farcical.

On the labor scene, a recent miners' strike in Queensland showed the workers attempting to spread a fightback against enterprise bargaining. The militant strike had the possibility of spreading nationally, but was squashed by the union leadership. In Victoria there has been the potential for several sectors mobilizing against austerity measures including teachers, health workers, and public transport workers. COFI/LRP in Australia has been intervening with revolutionary propaganda, including a discussion of the general strike as the way to fight Labor Party austerity. •

Articles from Back Issues

- No. 1: The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party
- No. 3: The Class Nature of the Communist Parties
- No. 4: The Spartacist League and the USSR
- No. 8: Transitional Program: Myth vs. Reality
- No. 9: Marxism and Military Policy; Afghanistan
- No.11: Iran: Revolution, War & Counterrevolution
- No.16: How Polish Solidarity was Defeated
- No.19: Black Upsurge; Marx and the World Crisis
- No.25: Communist Work in Trade Unions
- No.26: The Battle of Hormel
- No.27: Feminism & Pornography; Gorbachev's Reforms
- No.31: After the Crash; Palestine Revolution
- No.33: Death Agony of Stalinism; S. Africa & Socialism
- No.34: Massacre in China; Women and the Family
- No.35: U.S. Labor; East Bloc Breakdown; Abortion Rights
- No.36: Revolution in East Europe; Namibia; Panama
- No.37: Behind Mideast War; Marxist Theory of Stalinism
- No.38: U.S.'s Criminal War; Pabloite Theory's Death Agony
- No.39: New World Order; Cuba; Socialism in One Country?
- No.40: Racist Offensive; Soviet Coup; Labor Party in U.S.
- No.41: 'Rank and File' Frauds; ANC Represses Guerrillas
- No.42: Depression Election; Abortion Rights
- No.43: Black Explosions; Australian Crisis; Malcolm X
- No.44: Los Angeles; Health Care Fraud; South Africa
- No.45: Class War in Illinois; Race, Class & Cop Brutality
- No.46: S.Africa: Workers vs. ANC; Imperialism in Disarray
- No.47: Joblessness; Bosnia; Armed Self-Defense
- No.48: Racist Right Turn; COFI International Conference

Write for a complete list.

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Letters Welcome

We invite readers of *Proletarian Revolution* to send letters to the magazine. Names will be withheld on request. Write us at: P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008, USA.

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South Africa: The Coming Showdown Black Workers Betrayed By ANC Government

by Matthew Richardson

The first year of the ANC-led Government of National Unity (GNU) has been a telling lesson in the class struggle. The new government has done much to please the white capitalist class that rules the country and the imperialists who want to invest in the exploitation of the black masses. But it has done little to change the lives of the masses for the better, and much more to make their lives worse.

Seeing this, the masses are turning to the organizations they built and methods of mass struggle they developed in the long fight against apartheid, and are resisting. Strikes by workers in every sector of the economy, land occupations, rent boycotts, blockades and protests have challenged the new government. And the government has turned to the old apartheid police, army and special forces to defend itself.

A showdown between the still-capitalist government and the working class is inevitable. When they voted the African National Congress into office last year, the masses thought that their revolution was won. Now, the most politically advanced workers, who number in the thousands, are quickly realizing that the revolution is only just beginning. These vanguard workers must rearm their class with an understanding of their interests and revolutionary tasks. For this, only the authentic working-class weapon of Marxism will do.

This article draws a balance sheet of the first year of the Mandela government. We continue the League for the Revolutionary Party's discussion of the strategy and tactics that revolutionary workers will have to use in South Africa to lead their class to victory, as well as the lessons for revolutionaries internationally. This article will appear in two parts.

FROM SELLOUT ...

Previous articles have described how the ANC betrayed every basic demand of the black masses' struggle against apartheid: "one person, one vote" majority rule was replaced by rigged elections and a white veto of government decisions; nationalizing the "commanding heights of the economy" and redistributing wealth was denied in favor of privatization and austerity to repay the apartheid rulers' debts.

The gains the ANC now offers the masses are contained in its "Reconstruction and Development Program." The RDP promises the construction of one million new homes, electricity for 2.5 million households, ten years of free schooling for all, redistribution of 30 percent of the land, and the creation of 2 million new jobs. These measures are completely inadequate to satisfy the basic immediate needs of the masses. But the government will not deliver even these.

In its first year, it has built less than 1000 new houses,

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

There is a serial killer at loose in the United States. This mass murderer that slaughters at will is above the law, because it is the law. Recently it set August 19 as the day upon which it will kill Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Thomas Ridge, governor of Pennsylvania, ordered the execution. Ridge is one of the many bourgeois politicians who have whipped up the current clamor for more widespread use of the death penalty. Although legal executions are being inflicted with greater and greater frequency, they are not indiscriminate. The death penalty is in vogue today precisely because of capitalism's need to deepen discrimination. It is no accident that Jamal is Black and a noted fighter against racism.

Jamal, a journalist who grew up in Philadelphia, had been a spokesman for the Black Panther Party and was later associated with MOVE. He was prominent in the defense of the latter organization, a Black "back to nature" group based in Philadelphia that was brutally repressed. Targeted by the racist city government, Jamal was framed for the murder of a cop in 1982. After being shot and critically wounded by police, he was mercilessly beaten.

His trial was a parody of justice. He was given a hanging judge, forced to accept incompetent legal defense and subjected to a nearly all white jury — drawn from a city with a large Black population. Despite clear evidence of his innocence and open violations of legality by the prosecution, he was convicted and sentenced to death

Higher courts have rejected all his appeals. Attorney Leonard Weinglass has filed another appeal, to stave off the execution and to secure a new trial. This appeal can be successful if mass pressure is brought to bear. In spite of a lynch mob campaign being waged by the Fraternal Order of Police, demonstrations supporting Jamal's fight have been taking place across the country.

Funds are vitally needed for his legal defense. Contributions should be sent to:

Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal
163 Amsterdam Avenue, No. 115
New York, N.Y. 10023-5001.

Checks should be made out to the "Bill of Rights Foundation," earmarked for "Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defense." Mumia can be contacted at: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM 8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E. Roy Furman Hwy., Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090.

We in the LRP oppose the capitalist death penalty because in the U.S. it is inevitably aimed at Blacks and the working class. Contrary to the pacifistic opponents of the death penalty, authentic Bolsheviks do not oppose it on principle. Racist capitalist "justice" proves that the death penalty can help deter opposition. One day the workers are going to take the law into their own hands by seizing state power. Then, capitalism's political pimps who today sign the death warrants for heroic fighters like Mumia Abu-Jamal will face real justice themselves.

and Mandela's first budget actually *cut* real funding for education: now free education will be provided only to children under age six! The GNU now admits that only a fraction of the land promised will be redistributed. As Mandela confessed to a meeting of squatters under threat of being forced from their homes by the ANC-led government late last year:

I went around the country telling people we would ensure a better life for everyone. Today I have brought you none of those things, and I might not be able to bring you good news for [1995]. (*Newsweek* (U.S.), May 15.)

This is because no serious step can be made towards satisfying the masses' needs without challenging capitalist property. Just to pay for the meager promises of the RDP, the billions of dollars in debt to banks and financiers accumulated during apartheid would have to be repudiated, and the banks seized from their owners. For a real redistribution to the landless rural masses, the land would have to be seized from the capitalists. And to win all the masses' needs, the economy would have to be redirected from producing for the profits of the capitalists to producing for the needs of the masses. This can only be done by seizing control of industry from the capitalists and instituting a planned state economy.

The ANC has not done any of this because it is tied to the interests of the ruling capitalist class. Indeed, the ANC openly admits that the capitalists' profits are its priority. Using the Reagan/Thatcher "trickle-down theory," it now says that living standards can only be improved once profits have been raised. But this is a lie designed to trick the masses into sacrificing for those who exploit them. Nowhere and never have the masses' sacrifices ever led to any benefits later — just more poverty and greater exploitation.

... TO AUSTERITY

The basic economic policy of the ANC has been drawn up by the imperialist World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). In a once-secret letter to the World Bank and IMF reported on by South Africa's *Business Day*, the ANC agreed to all these institutions' policy demands (April 30, 1994). The World Bank in turn publicly outlined these policies in a report obscenely entitled "Reducing Poverty in South Africa" (June 1994). The report focuses its attention on the need to restrain and weaken the organized working class in South Africa and drastically lower wages so that South Africa's capitalists can compete with countries like Mexico, Taiwan and Bangladesh. This is, of course, a program for the impoverishment of South Africa's black masses and the taking back of the gains they won through their anti-

Fund Appeal

As a working-class organization with modest resources, we must count on the help of readers and friends. Our publications are priced below their cost of production to encourage working-class people to read them. In the past year, we have been hit with increased publishing costs, due to both the postal rate increase and the need for new equipment for the office.

We are very grateful to all who contributed after our last appeal. Please send whatever you can afford to: **Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008.**

apartheid struggle — not a plan for "reducing poverty."

Mandela admitted the basis of his policy, saying:

The finance ministers are putting ideas to me which will require us to tighten our belts. I think we can convince our people to do so. (*Socialist Worker* (U.S.), September 1994.)

The capitalists of the world are unanimous in approving Mandela and the ANC's pursuit of free market austerity. After Mandela outlined the ANC's economic policies in an address to a dinner in his honor attended by 800 corporate executives at the exclusive Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York last fall, the *Wall Street Journal* commented approvingly:

Mr. Mandela has in recent days sounded more like Margaret Thatcher than the socialist revolutionary he was once thought to be.

In an article entitled 'ANC Faces Clash With Unions,' the *Johannesburg Star* wrote along the same lines:

The irony is that the African National Congress-led Government has in many ways adopted economic policies more conservative than those of its National Party predecessors.

Despite the presence of a communist Deputy Minister of Finance, the old radical policies of the ANC and South African Communist Party have been stood on their head. The word socialism is never mentioned. (March 22, 1995)

The *New York Times* lauded Mandela in similar tones: **What has buoyed the confidence of investors, foreign and South African, is no mystery: political peace, combined with a growing conviction that Mr. Mandela and his Government are in many ways friendlier to business than their white predecessors.** (April 22, 1995; italics added.)

BACKGROUND TO THE SELLOUT

This betrayal is no surprise to Marxists. *Proletarian Revolution* has warned all along that the GNU, consisting of the ANC and the old apartheid establishment, would act in the interests of capital, not the black masses. We explained that the negotiations and election of the GNU represented a desperate attempt by the white ruling class to derail the revolutionary struggles for black liberation.

The 1980's saw the South African ruling class confronted by a deep crisis. The collapse of the Stalinist state-run capitalist economies of East Europe and Russia marked the start of an historic crisis for capitalism everywhere. With an economy resting predominantly on the export of mineral resources and relying on imports for its technology and machinery, South Africa has been particularly exposed to the deepening crisis of the world economy. Profits fell by double figures in each of the first three years of this decade, and the economy shrunk by 3.5 percent over the same period.

Internally the capitalists faced a mounting challenge from the black working class, which had launched its greatest wave of struggle: mass strikes rocked the country, huge trade unions were built and revolutionary ideas grew in popularity.

The only way South African capital can re-establish profitability is by smashing working-class resistance and drastically deepening exploitation. But the struggles of the mid-1980's taught the rulers that they alone were too weak to do this. While they could temporarily stabilize the situation by breaking individual strikes and assassinating individual leaders, they could not smash the unions and crush the mass strikes.

It became clear to the ruling class that before it could act decisively against the black masses, it had to weaken them. By conceding a subordinated and controlled degree of political power to the ANC, the rulers aimed to use it to

discipline and disarm the masses and put a stop to strikes and demonstrations. This is the counterrevolutionary essence of the negotiations and the GNU: the attempt by the white capitalist rulers to create an alliance between themselves and the ANC leaders *against* the black masses! (For a full analysis of the negotiations and elections, see our pamphlet *South Africa and Proletarian Revolution*, advertised on page 12.)

COMMUNIST PARTY: KEY TO BETRAYAL

It was inevitable that the ANC would make its peace with South Africa's white capitalist rulers. The ANC is not a party of the black masses; it represents the small urban black capitalist class whose opportunities for profit and expansion were stopped by apartheid. Too weak to launch an effective struggle against its oppression itself, the ANC sought to mobilize the masses as a battering ram against the racist regime, in order to force it to concede a slice of political power. By opposing the masses' aspirations in the interests of capitalism today, the ANC is only acting in *its* class interests.

The trouble for the ANC and South Africa's rulers in general is that through the course of the anti-apartheid struggle, the working class has come to the fore as the masses' leading force. Through mass strikes and rebellions, workers built huge independent unions and became increasingly conscious of their class interests. More and more workers saw their aim as the socialist revolution.

Under these conditions, only a misleadership speaking in the name of working-class revolution and socialism could hold the workers back and subordinate them to the ANC. This counterrevolutionary role has been played by the Communist Party (SACP). In the Stalinist tradition, their line was that before workers could win socialism, bourgeois democracy had to be guaranteed by an ANC-led "national liberation struggle." Until apartheid was ended and democracy won, the SACP demanded (and enforced) that the workers support the ANC and play no independent role.

The SACP's leaders have long been prominent in the ANC's leading bodies and hold numerous posts in the new government. But the SACP retains organizational independence from the ANC — all the better to deceive radicalized workers into remaining politically chained to the ANC. Through bitter and sometimes violent struggles in the 1980's, the SACP seized the leadership of the major union congress, COSATU, and subordinated it in an alliance with the ANC.

Throughout the negotiations, the SACP encouraged revolutionary-minded workers to have faith in the ANC's commitment to democracy and to see the SACP as the guarantor of the workers' interests in the new government. When workers have tried to break from the ANC and take the road of independent class struggle, the SACP's leaders have postured about breaking from the ANC "if" it betrays the workers, while arguing that until then the workers should fight to keep the ANC on their side and not abandon it to the bourgeoisie.

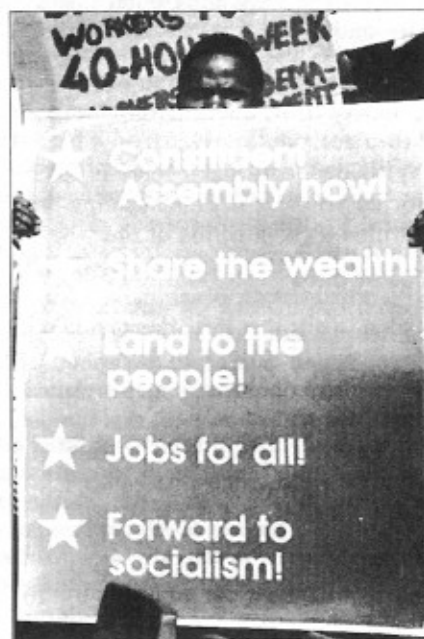
Most importantly, the SACP's ability to use the unions to discipline the working class makes it the key to the GNU and continued capitalist rule in South Africa.

REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

Responding to rapidly growing disenchantment with the ANC-led government, the SACP recently opened a "theoretical" argument with the ANC. It took to task an assertion made by the ANC in its journal *Mayibuye* that the 1994 elections consummated the "National Democratic Revolution," insisting that "the struggle continues." (*African Communist*,

No. 137.) However, we Marxists must say: the bourgeois democratic revolution with the ANC at its head is complete — and it is an abortion. While not one of the masses' democratic demands has been won, capitalism can afford to yield no more. It is now up to the working class to take forward the struggle for the masses' bourgeois democratic rights.

This confirms the Trotskyist strategy of *permanent revolution*: in this epoch of capitalism's decay, full democracy, not to mention freedom from want and exploitation, cannot be won under capitalist rule. Far from being able to concede



SACP achieved perfect score on its promises: every one betrayed.

such gains, crisis-ridden capitalism, however "democratic" its facade, can only sustain itself by taking away the past gains of the working class and intensifying its exploitation.

Thus today the question of democratic rights is completely tied to the struggle between workers and capital. The workers more and more look to democracy as a means to alleviate their exploitation and suffering, while the bourgeoisie increasingly sees democratic rights as a liability — an impediment to the more intense exploitation they need. The fundamental threat to capitalist rule presented by the masses' democratic desires means that democracy can only be conquered through workers' revolution. We Fourth Internationalists raise as the banner of the workers and oppressed of the world: *Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!*

The working class of South Africa will find no peaceful road to power. Like all capitalists, the South African bourgeoisie defends its rule with its entrenched state power of cops, soldiers and death squads, supported by the counter-revolutionary armed gangs of white fascists and Inkatha thugs. To win, the working class will have to organize an armed insurrection which destroys the capitalist state, annihilates the repressive apparatus and creates its own state.

A black workers' state in South Africa does not mean "driving all whites into the sea." It would encourage the relatively tiny white working class (as well as the middle class) to support the revolution — without letting anyone stand in the way of the revolution's needs.

The government of such a state would be the highest expression of a workers' democracy. It would consist of workers' representatives elected through "grass roots" workers'

councils, subject to immediate recall and paid no more than an average worker. The workers' state would seize all major sectors of the economy from the capitalists and establish an economic plan to direct production to eliminate scarcity and want — leading to a society where class divisions dissolve into a free association of peoples. Unemployment would be eliminated by dividing the necessary work equally among all workers, thereby reducing the hours worked by each worker. By seizing the wealth of the banks, the workers' state would launch an emergency program of relief for the poverty- and disease-stricken townships. Factories, mines and farms would operate under workers' control, i.e., workers' management.

THE INEVITABLE SHOWDOWN

The key to success for the South African revolution, as with all others, is the degree to which it is the opening victory in the world workers' socialist revolution. Socialism cannot be built in isolation. Only when the first workers' states are joined by others — especially in the imperialist economic powerhouses — could the necessary planned international division of labor be established for the building of socialism.

Given the masses' expectations for a social justice that capitalism can not deliver, a confrontation between the new government and the masses was inevitable. As we wrote immediately after the elections, this placed the new government in an impossible position:

Now the ANC has to hope that after all the suffering and struggle against apartheid, the masses can be forced to accept a "democratic exploitation" by a ruling class obscured by a haze of black parliamentary figures. But the masses threaten to use any democratic gains against the capitalist system itself. They wanted voting rights in order to choose leaders who would alleviate their exploitation and misery . . .

This leaves the ANC caught in a contradiction: it must present some social and democratic gains to the black masses if it is to have any hope of reconciling them to a reformed capitalism, but the capitalist system to which it is wedded cannot afford such gains. . . . With a decades-long tradition of struggle, with the continued presence of the fighting organizations the black workers built during that time (particularly the unions) and with huge expectations of the new government, mass struggles against the new government are guaranteed.

Believing they have finally won, the masses now expect a swift delivery of the fruits of victory. Their expectations are tremendously high and, given their years of suffering, their patience is low. The attitude of the more militant and politically advanced workers is one of suspicion and cautious distrust. After the numerous broken promises and capitulations by the ANC in the negotiations, they are wary of the new government and eager to test its character. A significant minority already understand that the ANC has sold out and are searching for an alternative. These explosive conditions will inevitably produce sharp outbursts of struggle. (*Proletarian Revolution* No. 47.)

Even with this expectation, workers moved surprisingly quickly to press their demands with mass action.

A hint of the looming upheaval came when the GNU was faced by mass opposition to one of its first decisions: to deliver raises to all office holders in the new government! While the average mine worker earns US\$1,600 a year, Mandela's pay was to be \$209,000, Cabinet Ministers \$125,333, and MP's \$51,500 — not to mention the gifts of

houses, cars and other items showered on them by the capitalists. And some \$3.5 million was to be spent on renovating the official homes of Mandela, ANC second-in-command Thabo Mbeki and National Party leader F.W. de Klerk. Key ANC and Communist Party leaders were found to be awarding themselves huge mansions and limousines. And still other members of the government were charged with out-and-out corruption: like Allan Boesak, who resigned under charges of theft from an aid agency — only to be appointed to the cushy position of Ambassador to Geneva!

The ANC's "grave train" of privilege and patronage reflects more than the leaders' greed: it expresses both the ANC tops' contempt for the masses, their lack of confidence that the GNU will last and their desire to make a quick profit in case it collapses under the pressure of the class struggle. With many workers already wary of a sellout, the scandal of greed at the very top levels of the government quickly spread through the poor working class neighborhoods and townships and threatened to become an immediate rallying point for opposition to the new government.

Some bourgeois leaders criticized the politicians' excesses, but not because they saw the need for wealth to be transferred to the masses. Rather, they saw the danger that the "grave train" made the task of talking the masses into sacrificing for the capitalists more difficult. Archbishop Desmond Tutu commented that:

Someone has observed that they stopped the grave train only long enough to get on. They cannot, with any integrity and credibility, ask the unions to moderate their claims to higher pay.

Mandela soon voiced the same opinion in explaining why he would reverse the decision to raise politicians' pay:

We have this problem: we have the high salaries and we are living in luxury. That destroys your capacity to speak in a forthright manner and tell people to tighten their belts. (*New York Times*, Oct. 31, 1994.)

MASS STRUGGLES CHALLENGE GNU

But Mandela's cynical criticism of the politicians' pay raise helped him little when he tried to talk the masses into "tightening their belts" for the fat capitalists. Little time passed before millions of workers launched a wave of strikes, demonstrations and occupations to immediately improve their living and working conditions. "We want something now, not tomorrow or next year" exclaimed striking steelworker Mtutuzeli Mpondo, summing up the mood of many. "We voted for change, but nothing seems to be changing in our lives, work places, homes, and in all spheres of life." (Labor Video Project, *Internet Bulletin*, Sept. 1, 1994.)

Most of the strikes were for improved wages and working conditions, often in connection with regular collective bargaining between employers and unions. Every sector of the economy was hit by such strikes, from auto to supermarkets, municipal workers to health and education. Even ex-ANC guerrillas being integrated into the racist South African army launched mass protests against their conditions and treatment. Other strikes were against racist incidents or practices in workplaces. Black miners struck against racist policies, and supermarket workers struck against racist dismissals. Still others were defensive struggles against layoffs and austerity drives, including those of the new government.

In the first 100 days of the GNU, 100,000 workers had struck. Strike days in the first three quarters of 1994 were 2.5 million, 100,000 more than in the same period of 1993. Some

bourgeois commentators have seized upon these figures to claim that the strikes were not so out of the ordinary.

But the importance of the 1994 strikes cannot be measured by either their size, duration or immediate success — indeed by these measures they were not so significant. Rather, their importance is their *political significance*: by this measure, the strikes were the most important in the whole history of the workers' struggle in South Africa. This is because they mobilized the working class against the class-collaborationist ANC-led government. One hundred strikes against the old apartheid regime with the workers mistakenly hoping that putting the bourgeois ANC in power would solve their problems means less than just one strike by against the ANC-led government, through which the workers begin to learn that they have to fight an independent class struggle against the capitalists and all their representatives.

The 1994 strikes began to open the class divide between the capitalist government and the working class. The experience of the strikes showed many thousands of workers that the GNU is not only governing in the interests of the capitalist class, but that it will defend capitalist interests with *the same state* of cops and soldiers which the apartheid rulers used for *the same purposes* before them. With this Marxist understanding, we can predict that these strikes will be remembered as the opening skirmishes through which the working class began preparing the way for an open class war against the capitalists.

LESSONS OF GOVERNMENT REPRESSION

The class line between the new government and the masses was drawn at the very outset of the strikes in the sharpest way: in blood. To the masses' horror, striking workers at the Pick 'n' Pay supermarket chain in a number of cities were attacked by police firing rubber bullets, wielding clubs and using attack dogs. The strikers valiantly fought back, but were overwhelmed by the cops' surprise attack and superior forces. Many were injured, and well over two thousand arrests were made over the course of the strike. Some women strikers were even tortured in jail.

The ANC immediately announced its regret for the police actions, insisting that the attacks were carried out by rogue cops and not on government orders. ANC Labor Minister Tito Mboweni promised that the security forces would be kept out of labor disputes in the future. But the workers were bombarded with a torrent of attacks from the government, including President Mandela, who condemned the strikers for having "failed to see the need to move from the politics of resistance to nation building." However, Mandela's widely publicized anger that Pick 'n' Pay, a high-profile financial supporter of the ANC and supposedly "progressive" capitalist, had been the target of strike action exposed the links between the ANC government and the ruling capitalists.

The experience of this one strike alone posed in the minds of many workers the question of the class nature of the new regime. As the slavishly pro-capitalist *South African Labour Bulletin* (September 1994) was forced to admit:

The police's role in intervening on the side of management presents serious problems ... Workers are now asking whether anything has changed at all. Before the new government was voted into power, the employers could always rely on the police. ... So, what's new? the workers ask.

Under pressure from the ranks of workers, the Communist Party was forced to censure Mandela's criticism of the strikers. But at the same time the SACP leadership did its

best to restrain the workers: now-deceased leader Joe Slovo called for a moratorium on all strike action, and the SACP bureaucrats who control the striking workers' union entered negotiations to end the strike. To keep control of the masses and let off steam, COSATU threatened to call a stayaway mass strike, but cancelled it at the last moment.

The fake lefts of the SACP mouthed even more radical criticisms of the ANC and SACP leaders, while posing no real alternative. Deposed Natal SACP leader Harry Gwala condemned the SACP leadership:

They think in the stage of compromise, reconciliation, and a government of national unity; the class struggle disappears, and they've got to be very good to other classes. (*Socialist Action* (U.S.), August 1994.)

If the workers were fooled by the ANC's promises not to allow the police attacks to be repeated, it could not have lasted long. Almost every major industrial and community struggle faced attack by the security forces over the next months. The attacks, which killed several and injured many more, were too numerous to list, but included:

- a police grenade attack on striking miners occupying mine shafts;
- the dispersal of thousands of striking municipal workers outside the Civic Center in Cape Town by cops firing bird shot, rubber bullets and tear gas;
- police attacks on homeless squatters and land occupiers on the orders of the SACP's Slovo.

In a report on a cozy day in the office with President Mandela, *Time* magazine quoted orders he had given the security forces in connection with a recent protest: "If you have live bullets, use them." (May 8.)

The police attacks on the strikers and protesters were made necessary for the government because the workers were

South African Workers' Library

In our last issue, we noted the urgent need for Marxist literature in South Africa. There are many young revolutionary workers in that country with a real thirst for learning about the theory, history and practice of the world communist movement.

Tragically, there are few copies of the great Marxist works to be found there, and they are financially out of the question for proletarian youth barely scraping out a living in the townships. Consequently, we decided to establish a Workers' Library in Cape Town and to create a fund to achieve that end.

In memory of a comrade who had devoted much of his life to the education of youth, the fight for Black liberation and revolutionary communism, we created the Steve Russell Fund. We asked for financial donations or books and pamphlets by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg. We have received some response so far, but much more is needed.

Please send books or contributions to: Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, N.Y. 10008. Checks should be made out to *Socialist Voice* and earmarked for the Steve Russell Fund.

threatening, and in many cases succeeding, to break free of the pro-ANC bureaucrats who control their unions. As we explained, the GNU will rely on these bureaucrats to "democratically" police the workers' movement, attempting to hold back and sabotage the workers' struggles. Only when the bureaucrats fail to "keep the peace" will the armed force of the state be used. As we wrote:

While the new government will have to use armed repression against any independent workers' upsurge, it will only do so as a last resort. . . . Repression would make clear the class struggle between the government and the black masses and so threaten to stir up greater uprisings.

UNION LEADERS POLICE MASSES

Rather, in seeking to subordinate the black workers, the government will rely mainly on the masses' own leaders to hold back and derail their struggles — just as it did during the negotiations. (PR 47.)

Perhaps the clearest example of this was the repression

"If it was the olden era, believe me, this strike would have been smashed a long time ago." (*Militant* (U.S.), Dec. 9.)

Matroose was right in his own way: in the days of apartheid the rulers did not give the union leaders a chance to sabotage the workers' struggles before using violence. Now the capitalists allow the workers' own leaders a chance to save them the messy task of repression.

This was confirmed in short order: when the union leaders denounced the strike, the workers responded by turning their strike organizations into the Turning Wheel union and vowed to continue to victory. On the second day of the new strike, with the union tops' attempt at sabotage lost, cops and soldiers in troop carriers attacked the unarmed strikers. Using tear gas and rifle butts, and placing pistols with silencers at the heads of sleeping drivers, the carefully planned police assault forced the strikers to lift their blockade.

While the strike was broken, many workers began to draw decisive conclusions on the need for a revolutionary struggle against the new government and the capitalist state

South African workers oppose privatization.



of the truckers' strike in August of last year. Demanding pay increases, shorter working hours and an end to racial discrimination by management, South Africa's truck drivers mounted a powerful strike which inspired workers across the country. To press their demands on management, the thousands of truckers blockaded the major routes between Johannesburg and Durban and around Port Elizabeth. Even the bourgeois *Weekly Mail* was forced to describe the strike as a "remarkable sign of worker solidarity, cutting across racial lines as black, white, Indian and coloured workers vented their frustration jointly." (August 26, 1994.)

The strike had been launched against the will of the pro-ANC leaders of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), who moved quickly to end it by signing a compromise Accord with the trucking bosses. But when the bosses broke the Accord, the truckers immediately launched a strike and more road blockades. While trying again to bring the workers' struggle to a halt, the union leaders also attempted to use the strike as an example of how the government was on the people's side. TGWU spokesperson Julius Matroose said,

it directs. A Turning Wheel press release angrily declared: **The Government of National Unity has shown its true colors. It is a government of the rich against the poor. It is a bosses' government.**

GNU AGAINST WORKERS: THE CLASS LINE DRAWN

This lesson alone, learned by thousands of workers already, shows the leap forward in the class struggle that the 1994 strikes signified. While the Turning Wheel statement does not speak for the masses of workers, nor even for the whole Turning Wheel membership necessarily, it does represent the thinking of a key layer of politically advanced workers. Many of these, who were distrustful of the ANC before the election, became convinced that the GNU is a front for capitalist rule through the course of the strikes. While still a small minority of the whole working class, these revolutionary-minded workers are being prepared by their experience of the struggle to turn to their fellow workers in the next period and lead them in a struggle against the ANC-led government and the capitalists it represents.

Some bourgeois commentators began to see the threat of the workers' economic strikes leading to a political challenge to the government. John Battersby of the *Christian Science Monitor* noted:

Concerns are surfacing in diplomatic and political circles that the contract disputes could escalate into a left-wing challenge to an ANC-government that is already growing comfortable with the benefits of social power.

There are signs of growing alienation among the ANC grass-roots and left-wing union allies, civic groups, and the South African Communist Party (SACP). (*Socialist Action* (U.S.), August 1994.)

Moreover, the education of the workers on the class line between them and the new government was not confined to the experience of the urban industrial struggles. In the working-class neighborhoods, townships and rural areas, struggles over land and housing set the masses against the ANC-led regime.

A focus of the community struggles against apartheid was the boycotting of rent and utilities payments by families in the townships. The boycotts were a protest against the miserable shacks and unserviced neighborhoods that the white rulers forced the masses to live in. Now, with only empty promises of houses and services to be built in the future, the ANC-led government demanded that the boycotts be ended and even that back rent be paid by some communities, before any of the masses' needs are met. But the ANC leaders' call for "ending the culture of nonpayment" led to an immediate clash. As the pro-ANC head of the Soweto Civic Association, Isaac Mogase, complained:

It was all very well when we told people not to pay. Back then, people raised their fists and said, "Viva the struggle, viva!" But when you turn around and tell people who have been living rent-free for years that now it's time to pay, you sort of put your head on the chopping bloc. (*Washington Post*, July 29, 1994.)

Demonstrations and strikes erupted against the GNU policies. When the police were sent by the government to quell the struggles, township residents fought back.

Similarly, homeless and landless squatter families, who occupied vacant land and paid no rent, came under fire. The late ANC Housing Minister Joe Slovo said that the GNU "is committed to respect constitutional rights in land against any unlawful infringement and unlawful occupation. Squatting cannot be condoned." (*New York Times*, July 6, 1994.)

But again, when the government sent the police to violently remove squatters and land occupiers, they faced mass resistance. The combined impact of the community and industrial struggles' often violent confrontation with the ANC-led government made its impression felt not only in the workers' developing class consciousness. The imperialists' newspapers, while concerned about the threat of the mass struggles, were pleased to draw the class line against the workers and find the ANC clearly on its side. The *Washington Post* wrote admiringly of Mandela:

He has dealt with organized labor's strikes in a way that has cost him politically, since the unions are his allies, but has won him the essential respect and cooperation of the international banks. (Oct. 9, 1994.)

REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM OF ACTION

Foreseeing such developments, the League for the Revolutionary Party elaborated, in previous editions of *Proletarian Revolution*, a Program of Action for the struggles of

the South African workers. Guided by our strategy of world proletarian socialist revolution, the Program of Action aimed to show how revolutionary workers in South Africa should intervene in the ongoing struggles of their fellow workers. It proposed the tactics of mass struggle most suited to building the organization and fighting power of the working class in pursuit of its immediate aims.

We argued that through such tactics the working class could snatch some gains and victories from the ruling class. But fundamentally, the experience of the struggle would combine with the teachings of revolutionaries to lead the masses to the conclusions that 1) they cannot win freedom and plenty within the capitalist system, and 2) they as a class have the organization and power to overthrow the capitalists and rule themselves.

The course of the strikes powerfully confirmed the importance of the tactics we outlined. When the government attacks we predicted came upon the unprepared workers, they struggled towards precisely the tactics we had outlined.

Armed Self-Defense Guards

In looking to the mass struggles we knew were coming, we had written:

Armed self-defense guards ... must be a central policy of [revolutionaries] ... The attacks by police, the army, the fascists and Inkatha have already made armed self-defense in the townships an immediate necessity. The more our struggle challenges the ruling class, the greater will be the frequency and power of the attacks by the counterrevolutionaries. We must place no faith in the "post-apartheid" police.

Defense guards are required in connection with every strike and demonstration, above all the general strike. They should be organized at every workplace as organs of the strike committees ... (PR 46.)

We have already described how in response to the police attacks on workers that we warned would happen, the workers fought back. But in the lead-up to the struggles, many suffered from a naive hope that the ANC would not use the old apartheid state against the workers, and this left them unprepared for the attacks.

The General Strike Tactic

The key to our proposed defense of the workers' struggles was to overcome their isolation. We knew that for as long as strikes, land occupations and other struggles remained separate from one another, the government could defeat them one by one through a combination of isolation and repression. But we also knew that with the heightened expectations of the masses of workers and the class-wide questions which would immediately be posed by the first struggles under the new government, there would be a tremendous opportunity to mobilize the whole working class in mass strike action that could push back the government attacks. We wrote:

The bosses' attacks on wages, jobs and living conditions have already made a defensive mobilization of the working class necessary; these attacks will continue under the new capitalist government after the elections. Thus the demand for a general strike must be a central tactic. ... But this can not be a repeat of what workers have already been through. From the beginning we would urge workers to see that the general strike organizes picket lines and factory occupations, not "stayaways" designed to leave them

passive and vulnerable to attack in the townships and removed from the centers of the economy. (PR 46.)

When issues affecting the working class are at stake, mobilizing the whole class in struggle makes sense to even purely reform-minded workers. We explained that revolutionaries would not counterpose the general strike to ongoing strikes in individual workplaces or industries, but would argue for the need to spread the struggle towards a general strike.

We added that while they should make of point of propagandizing for the idea of a general strike among the vanguard workers in the current conjuncture, revolutionaries would *agitate* among the masses of workers for a general strike when there were definite moves toward mass struggle.

Under these conditions, and with the masses of workers holding illusions that the unions tops might lead such a struggle, revolutionaries would raise the demand for a general strike on the COSATU leaders. The demand would not aim to create the illusion that the union tops would really lead such a mass struggle to victory. On the contrary, it would be the only way to effectively break the masses' illusions in their leaders. By constantly explaining that while they could be forced to call a general strike, the pro-capitalist union leaders would try to sabotage the struggle and could not be relied upon to lead it, the fight for them to call and lead the general strike would give workers the opportunity to see whether we were right in this warning.

Our arguments for the general strike were quickly confirmed, as workers strained in precisely this direction during the strikes and other struggles. In order to head off the moves toward more massive strike action out of the control of their control, the COSATU leaders scheduled a mass stayaway strike, only to call it off at the last moment.

In this situation, the demand "COSATU Leaders—Turn Your Threats of a Stayaway Into a General Strike!" could have won a wide audience among the workers. The demand would not only have focussed the masses' minds on the necessary tactic of struggle. When connected by revolutionaries to warnings that the COSATU leaders will betray the struggle, the demand could have exposed the misleaders and done much to establish the revolutionaries as the authentic leaders of the working class.

Strike Committees

The bureaucrats' betrayal confirmed not only our warnings but also our arguments on how to prepare. Since it would seem ridiculous to warn of sabotage by the union leaders without proposing a way to combat this threat, we raised the need for strike committees.

We explained that masses of workers still holding illusions in the union tops could join with the more advanced workers in building strike committees to ensure the highest levels of organization and mobilization for the strike; this is how revolutionaries would motivate their *agitation*. Revolu-

tionaries would also demand that the union leaders support and assist in the creation of strike committees, pointing out that no genuine workers' leader has any reason to fear the highest level of rank-and-file control of the struggle. This again would be an important tool in unmasking the union tops' pretensions to militancy and "workers' control."

But we pointed out that in their *propaganda*, revolutionaries would connect the strike committees to the threat of betrayal by the union leaders and therefore to the need for a new workers' leadership:

Revolutionaries would argue for factory-based strike committees to control the strike. Workers could then rely on their own leadership and be able to guard against, and soon dispense with, the treacherous union bureaucrats. (PR 44.)

The vanguard workers were already weary of the ANC before it came into office, so they watched closely the attitude of their union leaders to the new government. When the union tops immediately showed their willingness to cut sellout deals with the capitalists and oppose workers' demands for struggle in the name of the ANC's "belt tightening" strategy, increasing numbers concluded that COSATU was being turned into a body of "sweetheart unions" by the pro-ANC union leaders. The *New Nation* wrote of a number of major strikes in which workers seized leadership of the struggle from the union bureaucrats:

The perception has been created that unions have softened into sweetheart organizations that seem unwilling to act in a way that upsets the ANC-led government of national unity. (Oct. 14, 1994.)

One of the strikes the author of the above lines was referring to was that of the truck drivers who had struck against the wishes of the TGWU leaders and then turned their strike committee into an alternative union when the union leaders denounced their second strike.

In our earlier propaganda we explained that it is important that the call for strike committees be used as a weapon in revolutionaries' fight to replace the current union leaders — not as a way to avoid the fight against the central leadership. That means, particularly at these early stages of the struggle, that if the workers are won to leading the strike through their strike committee, they should make clear that they are not abandoning the union or trying to divide the workers. Particularly, if the workers of the rest of the union are not convinced that the union tops have betrayed the struggle, the strike committee should demand that the union leaders support the strike as a way of exposing them in the eyes of the masses of their fellow workers.

The importance of this understanding was shown in the example of the formation of the Turning Wheel Union as a separate trade union from the TGWU. This was a bad mistake: while it was necessary for the truck drivers to form their own strike organizations to take the struggle forward, it was wrong to renounce the TGWU and effectively abandon fellow workers still in the clutches of the union's misleadership. Rather, while fighting for the whole union to join its struggle, the Turning Wheel workers should have used every opportunity to prepare the union membership to oust the current leaders and replace them with a leadership committed to a program of working class independence and action.

A number of similar struggles by workers against the will of the union bureaucrats followed. In the Western Cape, striking construction workers formed an unofficial Building Workers' Council uniting workers from six different unions.

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Municipal workers struck against their leaders' orders, reportedly going so far as to break union rules to do so. And there are reports of new civic organizations being built in the townships to combat the bureaucratic degeneration of the established civics.

An example of particular importance, because of the way they moved from holding illusions in the ANC government to struggling against it, came from workers at King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban. For some time before the 1994 elections, the workers had complained of low wages and racist management, and each time they were told by the

government. But such betrayals are very natural: the unions' alliance with the ANC means that they must accept the limits of the policies of the ANC government.

This is why we in the LRP have constantly argued that the touchstone of revolutionary policy in South Africa is the fight for the organizational and political independence of the working class from the bourgeois ANC. In the elections of last year, revolutionaries opposed any vote for the ANC. Knowing the importance of drawing the class line against the bourgeoisie, we insisted that it was class treason for any political party claiming the leadership of the proletariat to



Workers are learning that only revolution will produce "Jobs for All."

leaders of their union, NEHAWU, that they must wait for the elections and vote for the ANC, who would then solve their problems. On this advice, they put off their strike.

But after the elections, nothing was done about their grievances, negotiations between the union and hospital management were proving unproductive, and the union tops continued to oppose strike action. Fed up, the workers went on strike. To organize and lead their strike, the workers turned their workplace group, formed as part of the negotiations, into a strike committee called the Workers Forum.

COSATU: Break from the ANC!

Uniting against the workers, hospital management and the union tops called on the ANC to intervene to stop the strike. But when regional ANC Health Minister Zweli Mkhize told the workers to go back to work, they refused. Mkhize immediately sought a court order and made vague threats against the leaders of the strike. S'bu Mtshali, chairman of the Workers Forum, made clear the link between the union bureaucrats' betrayal of their struggle, and the alliance with the ANC, telling the *Weekly Mail*:

The ANC is in government. NEHAWU is a child of COSATU and COSATU is in alliance with the ANC. Just because we got an ANC government NEHAWU is siding with the employer. It is very wrong to do that. (Quoted in *Workers Power* (Britain), October 1994.)

Mtshali is correct — it is "very wrong" for the leaders to betray their members in the interests of the ANC-led

vote for the ANC or any other bourgeois party.

We continue that attitude toward the ANC-led government today: *No Support to the GNU!* Revolutionaries must explain to their fellow workers that the ANC-led government is their class enemy and will have to be overthrown along with the whole capitalist system. But it is important to recognize that revolutionaries cannot call for the overthrow of the government now by raising slogans like "Down With the GNU." Such a slogan today could only alienate workers who are prepared to launch mass struggles to press many demands from the government, but who are not convinced of the need to overthrow it.

Until the masses can be immediately prepared to replace the existing government with their own, revolutionaries must prepare the way for this by patiently explaining the inevitable need to overthrow the government, and by fighting for the immediate organizational and political independence of the workers' mass organizations from the ANC. Centrally, this means that revolutionaries fight to break the COSATU unions from the ANC and onto the road of independent class struggle, raising the demand on the union leaders: *COSATU: Break From the ANC!*

This policy of class independence frames all of the earlier tactics of our Program of Action. For example, we explained that the independent mobilization of the working class in a general strike was absolutely incompatible with the class-collaborationist politics of the COSATU leadership. To be successful, the general strike would have to be a part of

the struggle to break COSATU from the ANC.

With masses of workers seeing the ANC implement its "belt-tightening" strategy, but still holding illusions in the possibility of forcing the ANC to concede to its demands for jobs, wage rises and social services, there is a tremendous potential for mobilizing the masses of workers in a struggle to break COSATU's alliance with the ANC. Even workers who do not wish to oust the ANC can see the need for the unions to be independent of it in order to most effectively press their demands on the government. This opens up a perspective of mass struggle through which the workers can learn just how far they will have to go to win their demands.

Like the slogan to bring down a government where we have to propose how to replace it, revolutionaries cannot call for the breaking of COSATU's political alliance with the ANC without proposing what should replace it. We will deal with how revolutionaries can answer this question in the second part of this article.

For now, it is important to consider how the workers have increasingly questioned COSATU's alliance with the ANC, as they saw the ANC oppose their demands and support the capitalists. This discontent forced even staunchly pro-ANC union leaders to voice their concern that the ANC was selling out. For example, James Motlatsi, head of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), waxed radical when he stated at the end of last year:

It would be the biggest betrayal in our history if, after all the sacrifices endured by our people, the ANC became an instrument of the capitalist class in South Africa ... it would be dangerous to think that could not happen. (Militant (U.S.), Dec. 9, 1994.)

The bureaucrats did not make these radical noises out of concern for the independent interests of the working class. Mouthing such criticisms was the only way they could get workers to listen to their appeals for continued support for the ANC, which they framed in terms of stopping the potential sellout.

Similarly, unable to ignore the debate within the working class on whether to break links with the ANC, *The Shop-steward*, a strictly pro-ANC/SACP journal which deals with views and issues of the rank-and-file leaders of COSATU, featured in its August-September edition a special feature entitled "The Alliance: What's in It for the Workers?" The article repeated the standard SACP line that the working class must maintain its alliance with the ANC in order to fight for influence within the ANC against the capitalists.

But it was also forced to report on the metalworkers' union's call for a break from the ANC and a discussion of building an independent party of the working class, as well as the arguments of the Workers' List Party, which pretends to be fighting for an independent workers' party. (See Part 2 of this article.)

NECESSITY OF REVOLUTIONARY PARTY LEADERSHIP

The 1994 strikes and rebellions showed the fighting spirit, bold creativity and courage of the South African working class. In the course of the struggles the workers did as well as they possibly could with improvised responses to surprise developments in the class struggle, and against all the efforts of their own leaders.

But the misleaders' success in temporarily derailing the struggle, and the harsh repression suffered by many workers, indicate how little the working class can afford to be caught unprepared in the future. If this problem remains unresolved,

the workers face the danger of dissipating their revolutionary energy and weakening their ranks.

The working class needs a new leadership that can guide it to victory. The reason why the COSATU leaders sell out is their commitment to the capitalist system. They curtail the workers' struggles and demands within the limits that the capitalist system can afford. This shows why the only leadership that can effectively guide the workers' struggle, even for minor reforms, is one that is committed to the overthrow of the capitalist system and its replacement by workers' rule.

The days of the "condescending saviours" — middle-class intellectuals benevolently leading the masses or proposing to make the revolution for them — are coming to a close. The working class, through its most class-conscious layer, must build its own vanguard party of world socialist revolution.

The strategic task of the revolutionary party will be to prepare our class to make the socialist revolution by raising its understanding of its independent class interests and revolutionary tasks. The revolutionary party will do this by fighting for the leadership of the ongoing struggles of the workers with a program to unite the whole working class in an independent struggle for its immediate aims. By openly arguing for their full revolutionary program, the revolutionaries will use the experience of the struggle to prove to their fellow workers the absolute necessity of the socialist revolution and revolutionary leadership. This was the purpose of our Program of Action.

The general strike mobilization of the working masses, and the formation of the new mass organizations we advocated in connection with it, hold the potential to confirm in the minds of many workers the revolutionary arguments. By organizing and mobilizing the full fighting force of the working class, and by testing to the maximum the workers' illusions in the possibilities of reforming capitalism, the experience of the general strike would show the masses both the possibility and necessity of the socialist revolution.

By showing the way forward in the workers' struggles with their Program of Action, revolutionaries could have established themselves as dependable leaders in the eyes of broader numbers of their fellow workers. And by having their warnings of the union leaders' betrayals confirmed, they would have been able to expose the pro-ANC leaders and win significant support as their replacement.

But without a revolutionary party developed yet in South Africa, these opportunities were lost. Thanks to the union leaders, the government re-established control and the mass struggles were quelled. But clearly not for long. ●

[to be continued in the next issue]

South Africa and Proletarian Revolution

The South African black working class is the leading mass force in the struggle to overthrow world imperialism and free the human race. This pamphlet, a collection of articles by Matthew Richardson from *Proletarian Revolution*, details the revolutionary lessons of the rich experience of the South African proletariat.

A COFI Pamphlet

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Populism

continued from page 1

Since the 1970's, the economic gap between the big capitalists and laboring masses has been widening throughout the world. Among the advanced industrial nations, the U.S. has the greatest chasm. In 1989, the wealthiest one percent of American families, those worth \$2.3 million or more, owned almost 40 percent of the wealth. And in terms of income, in 1993 the top five percent "earned" 20 percent of the country's income, while the bottom two-fifths got only 14 percent.

The growing income gap between the capitalists and the

can't hit just the poorest workers and the jobless. And exploitation must be enhanced in the crucial private industrial sector.

It has already begun. The U.S., after falling behind its rivals, has recently re-achieved a rapid industrial productivity growth rate. It has gained on but not caught up to Japan. Despite recession, U.S. manufacturing productivity rose by 3.2 percent a year from 1990 through 1993. That more than doubled Germany and Japan's pace. In a combined and uneven fashion, U.S. capital has introduced new technology in some manufacturing sectors and cheap — often illegal immigrant — labor in others. Huge speed-up drives have accompanied these changes. Arduous overtime is forced on many workers. Overall, the U.S. has been more successful than its

Decatur 1994: Locked-out Staley workers link labor, Black struggles.



workers is the result of the attack capitalism has mounted in the past quarter-century. The real wage rate for workers has been falling since 1970. Federal and state tax rates on the rich have been lowered from 1980 to the present.

Since the end of the prosperity bubble, world capitalism has seen a steady decline in its rate of profit. The bourgeois strategy for recovery has been to engineer a "contained depression," an effort to achieve some of the benefits capitalism gets from depressions without risking an all-out plunge.

The first goal has been to undermine wages and conditions without triggering a class revolt; for this, the capitalists have used the union bureaucracy. The second aim has been to eliminate weaker capitals without driving big capital to the wall. An all-out depression in which major firms go under would threaten to bring down the whole interconnected financial structure.

The Republicans' "Contract with America," although cloaked in populist rhetoric, highlights the drive against the workers. And, as we observed in PR 42, Clinton has explicitly stated that the U.S. must become a lower wage country. Of course, he sees this as growing out of the need to compete on "the global market."

THE COMING ATTACK

At this point, government cutbacks are the cutting edge of the attacks on workers. But this won't be enough: the "social wage" provides less than one-third of workers' overall incomes. Wages, the larger portion, will have to be hit directly, far more than they have been already. The attack

rivals in squeezing its working class without provoking a mass response — so far.

As the declining rate of profit spurs greater rivalries among the U.S., Japan, Germany and lesser powers, full-scale trade war is on the horizon. And over that horizon is World War III. Giant corporations, state agencies and think-tanks already plan in the context of escalating world competition. It is not only economic rivalry: they are gearing the economy to maintain military superiority — to police the world, overawe rival powers and win a shooting war if necessary.

As the trade war heats up, the pressure will grow to mobilize resources for a massive re-industrialization of "Fortress America." Growth of military and related production was the prelude to World War II, and that was minor-league compared to today's needs. Only the capitalists' state has the resources and ability to organize such a mobilization. War industry depends on having an extensive foundation in other heavy and light industries. The state will no longer be able to allow these industries to depend on raw materials and production coming from rivals or unstable areas abroad.

Therefore we can expect a rise in employment in private manufacturing, even though it won't reach past heights. Inevitably it will need not only more workers but a younger, more malleable work force to operate newer and faster machinery: lower-wage workers, more able to handle forced overtime and miserable speed-up. Capitalism will still keep a huge reserve of unemployed labor, and will have to widen the multi-tier wage/benefits system based on even lower wages for new hires than today. In sum, the ruling class has to

deepen its exploitation of its present work force and add new, super-exploited production workers.

Stanford University economist Paul Krugman observed at a Federal Reserve Bank symposium in 1994:

There is a well understood way to reduce . . . unemployment, but it involves creating more jobs at the expense of [creating] more extensive and severe poverty. . . . This is a harsh route, in which some people end up on the scrap-heap. (cited in *News & Letters*, June 1995.)

More jobs at lower wages: a recipe for more exploitation.

GREED IN CAPITALISM'S SERVICE

Why this compulsion? The rich are indeed voracious money-grubbers, but that isn't the heart of the problem. The individual capitalist is motivated by greed: he sees himself driven by competition to get a larger share of the market. And he's right: if capital doesn't grow, it dies. The individual capitalist who isn't greedy enough is a dead capitalist.

The system itself, however, functions by using that personal passion to carry out its own internal drive to accumulate more and more capital. Capital is produced by the working class but appropriated by the capitalist class. The workers produce commodities with a surplus value above what they receive back as wages; they are exploited. This exploitation is the source of the profits the capitalists use to plow back into the productive system in order to accumulate.

The individual capitalist sees the need to add new machinery, to fire some workers and speed up others. Competitive greed is only the mechanism by which the system forces capitalists to execute its inner laws of accumulation.

Capitalism survives by squeezing the life-blood out of the proletariat. At the same time, it is forced to mobilize new layers of workers, which is dangerous from the bosses' standpoint. The proletariat also has internal drives under capitalism. It not only has the power to stop production and thereby profits; its collective strategic position, and the class struggle it is compelled to wage, drive it toward the seizure of the means of production now held as capitalist property. Thus capitalism builds, organizes and empowers the class that is its own grave-digger.

Ownership and control over the means of production give the capitalists the wealth and power to rule society. An attack on the greedy is like getting rid of the weeds by cutting off the tops; the system itself must be rooted out.

MIDDLE-CLASS MYTHS

A major role of politics in capitalist society is to undermine the workers' struggle. U.S. capitalism has historically fashioned two potent weapons toward this end.

1) It proclaims America as the unique land of social mobility, a country where people are not locked into classes. The American flag stands as a symbol of the right to advance. Class war isn't necessary because the American people live in the land of opportunity.

2) It uses the racial subjugation of Blacks to convince whites that they are the rightful heirs to the American legacy and thus divide and conquer the working class. Anti-Black racism feeds as well into other chauvinist hostilities toward Latinos, immigrants and others.

Social mobility and racism are materially rooted in the way capitalism doles out the sops forced from it. Sections of the middle strata, including the aristocracy of labor, are given the lion's share. They are overwhelmingly white. Even though their incomes are actually lowered by the greater exploitation

of others, their edge in the economic pecking order becomes their badge of identity as the true "American People."

Social mobility was real for a sizeable minority during the prosperity bubble, but its day is done. However, America's dirty little secret isn't sex, it's the existence of classes. Populism, the ideological reflection of the American Dream of social mobility, flourishes when the capitalists go on the offensive. It hides the importance of class. It says the source of the attacks on the masses isn't the capitalist system and its ruling class, but a powerful greedy cabal. It seeks to mobilize the "ordinary people" against such evil-doers and those they allegedly choose to favor, like Blacks.

Populism is spreading. For the masses, it is preliminary and transient, a first sign of their willingness to fight the attacks. For the leaders, it reflects an ingrained hostility to working-class independence and to any struggle to overthrow capitalism. Populism is an ideology that helps capitalism cover up for the system. And it is inherently nationalist: some trends openly embrace super-patriotism and racism, while other wings just pave the way unconsciously.

The Oklahoma City bombing gave publicity to the proliferating militias and the growth of right-wing populism in general. As well, "Slick Willie" Clinton became president by waving the populist flag. His sometimes opponent, Jesse Jackson waves it more. Even the overt Wall Street wing of the Republican Party beats a populist drum, marching in and out of step with more plebeian Republican allies. And last but not only temporarily least, the pseudo-socialist left flies populist banners as student and labor protests begin to erupt.

FROM POPULISM — TO FASCISM

The populist danger apparent to most today is on the far right. This trend has its roots in the reaction of the radicalizing petty bourgeoisie to their worsening situation.

This layer has taken quite a wallop. Small businesses fold by the minute. Big corporations scrap whole layers of middle management and supervisory staff. Small farmers are constantly under the gun. Sections of the labor aristocracy, including white and blue collar workers, no longer wanted by downsizing and modernizing industries, often adopt social attitudes similar to those of the petty bourgeoisie. For most, especially the large numbers who are ex-New Deal Democrats, turning conservative was a consciously radical act.

Racist backward consciousness cannot be underestimated as a factor in these elements' shift to the right as they radicalized. While historically they saw mobility as a white right, the Black struggles of the '60's convinced many, often grudgingly, that Blacks had that right, too. Now Blacks are seen as a threat to their jobs and well-being. The decay of capitalism has impacted upon their provincial outlook. The cities seem like cesspools of drugs, divorce, abortion, porn and crime; suburbia seems hellbent on the same path.

Not seeing the exploitative system, they see nefarious individuals and powerful interests doing them in. They feel that some sinister force is destroying the old America and is blocking their way upward, preventing the hardworking, law-abiding, patriotic, white Christians from rising or even keeping what they already have. A huge government bureaucracy is eating up their tax dollars.

They are determined to find out who is controlling government and using it to favor Blacks, Latinos, Asians and immigrants over "real Americans"? Who is pissing away our tax money for costly adventures abroad? For the moment, the answer is corrupt and greedy career politicians and

welfare state bureaucrats.

For now, most of these elements support the center and right Republicans. The fights over legislation within the Republican congressional bloc reflect the class differences between the ruling class and the petty bourgeoisie. The so-called "movement" Republicans are the distorted reflection of the radical populist petty-bourgeois base. These elements stress the social issues like family values, anti-abortion, anti-gay rights, religion, super-patriotism, barely hidden racism and overt anti-immigrant bias, along with tax breaks.

They are increasingly critical of the Republican leadership's outright favoritism toward big corporations. The Pat Buchanans already have a hard time keeping their base locked inside Bob Dole's party. The traditional Republicans reflect the outlook of the dominant conservative sectors of the big bourgeoisie and, campaign rhetoric aside, have a difficult job with populist legislative issues. As Buchanan said:

All the big money in the Republican Party is pro-GATT, and all the populists are against it. ... The party went with the big money and stiffed the populists to pay its campaign debts. (*New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1994.)

A marginal but growing number of people have moved to the more extreme right, beyond the Republican fringe. Many of the militia types gave support to closet-fascist David Duke's mainstream electoral ventures in 1992 and will vote for only certain Republicans and for right-wing third parties. They have moved decisively toward direct action, stretching from military training to terrorist acts.

The militias march under the broad banner of God, the Constitution, the American People, anti-government and free enterprise. However, beneath the populist surface there is a leadership using this base and committed to building for fascism in the future. Today they grow by pushing absurd populist notions: that the U.N. and/or the Jews control government, that Blacks and immigrants are getting all the jobs and feasting on welfare. They cannot yet mobilize under the open fascist program of union-busting, lynch mobs and pogroms.

As the crisis deepens, if no mass proletarian revolutionary alternative succeeds in taking power, the fascist elements will flourish. Big capitalists will eventually transfer their affections from the Republicans all the way to open fascism. In its epoch of decay, capitalism relies as a last resort upon a fascist mobilization of the petty bourgeoisie, driven wild by the system, to smash the working class and all the oppressed.

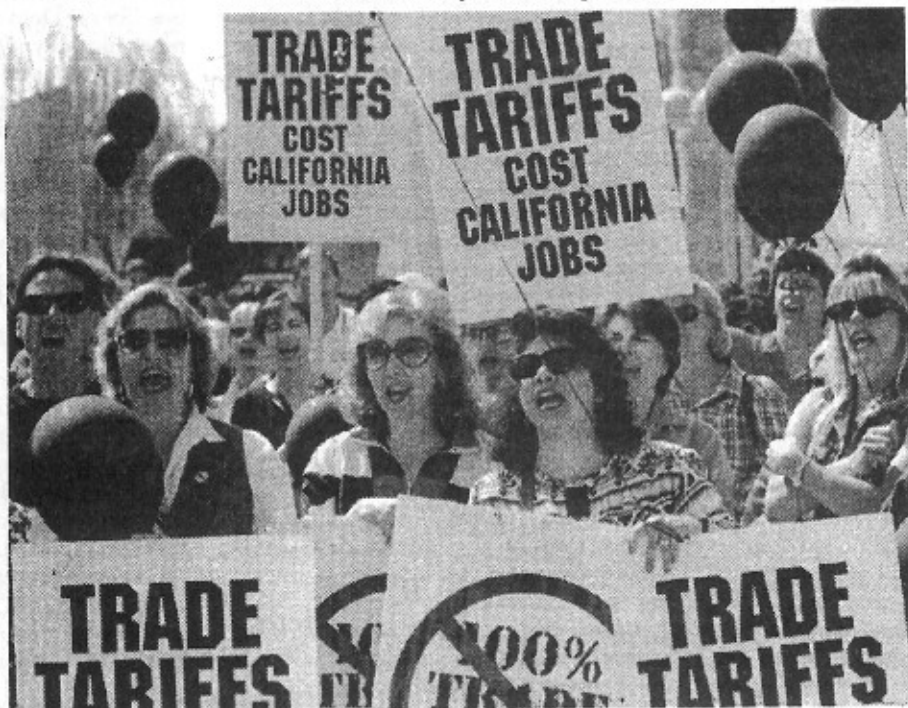
LABOR'S LOVE LOST

In response to the capitalist offensive, the unions have accepted large-scale unemployment, enormous losses in wages and working conditions and even an amount of union-busting. From over 30 percent in the 1950's, union membership has plunged to the point where they represent only 15.5 percent of the work force, 10.6 percent of the private sector.

What energy the fossilized bureaucracy expended has been used to undermine the few strikes that it has allowed to break out. Thus far Kirkland and his fellow bureaucrats have

succeeded in neutralizing, isolating and containing the struggles of that section of "the people" who are the only force capable of leading the movement to smash the capitalist onslaught, the industrial working class.

Despite their dwindling base, the unions still organize the heavy industries. Both because of the critical role workers in these industries can play within the working class, and, in turn, as a decisive leadership for all the oppressed masses, the bureaucracy, even in its negative and suppressive way has demonstrated its key social importance.



Workers must turn imperialists' trade war into class war, or hot war is sure to follow.

Even with its victories over major unions, discussed in the article on the Illinois "War Zone" in this issue, the bourgeoisie is not on a union-smashing rampage. It moves hesitantly toward challenging the major industrial unions in their urban and suburban strongholds where the potential for a class explosion would be greatest. There it would meet head on the still sizeable contingents of Black workers, who, because of their history of struggle, constitute a particularly explosive sector. In the cities, factory and workplace struggles could easily spread to the unemployed and other oppressed sectors of the proletariat.

The Los Angeles riot was understood by the capitalists to be a multi-racial working-class rebellion. It was an enormous threat; imagine what it would have been had a class-conscious strategy been adopted by the rioters. They would have fought for a general strike by the working class at large — making specific appeals to the unions and to the workplaces directly. (See our analysis in *PR 47*.)

AFL-CIO TOPS DEBATE PLASTIC SURGERY

The normal hesitancy of the capitalist class in waging the class war is slowly giving way to greater confidence, given the craven policies of the labor bureaucracy. Hiding their collective head in the sand will not save the bureaucrats, much less the workers. The capitalists literally have no choice.

The recently intensified attack by the government and

the private sector has compelled a wing of the bureaucracy to rebel against Lane Kirkland & Co. The leaders of over twenty unions, largely organizing industrial and government workers and representing a solid majority of the members, broke the yellow wall of silence that usually suppresses fights at the top of the AFL-CIO. They stressed the need to reinvigorate the dwindling power of labor.

As we write, they have just forced Kirkland to retire in favor of his long time ally, Tom Donahue. At the moment, the opposition favors John Sweeney of the SEIU (the service employees union). Communists support neither side in this cosmetic rebellion. Most workers are indifferent, having no illusions in the opposition, which put forward no program or strategy different from Kirkland's, only the need for a younger look, more energy and more populist rhetoric.

Sweeney, until yesterday Donahue's protege, was warmly greeted by the *Wall Street Journal*, proving he is no radical. His allies leading the UAW are fresh from the betrayal of the Caterpillar strike. His friends in the machinists' union only a few years ago crippled the Eastern Airlines strike.

Behind the facelift the old rot persists. For all the tub thumping, the dissidents have avoided any attempt to mobilize the ranks against Kirkland. Most of them, like Kirkland, are committed to the Democratic Party — they only want to talk louder and ask a little more. They have no desire to lead an actual movement of workers into a class confrontation.

A few of these "progressives," along with the pseudo-revolutionary centrists who tail them, raise the idea of a labor party. In the 1930's, U.S. followers of Leon Trotsky called for a labor party in an effort to translate the independent class militancy of the CIO workers' movement onto the political scene. Trotsky called on workers who saw the need for a class party to fight to keep it from becoming reformist. He urged them to create a revolutionary party of their own.

Today, the pro-labor party bureaucrats do not attempt to counterpose it to the Democratic Party and its program. They seek to lure in pro-Democrat bureaucrats while avoiding stirring up the ranks. The labor party call today is a call for a reformist deathtrap for workers when they break from the Democrats.

LEFT POPULISM

The importance of the labor bureaucrats has been negative. By containing the workers in strategic industries they have forestalled an overall workers' movement. As well, this has prevented the working class from providing leadership for other oppressed layers, including the distraught middle strata. Thus they have served as a pin intractably stuck in a grenade.

Without the bureaucracy's containment, the phony socialist left could never even attempt its present course of action: organizing protest actions based on populist appeals.

Left populism reflects the outlook of the beleaguered middle-class intelligentsia, liberal professionals and bureaucratic layers that have developed to administer welfare state reforms. Tied to the state directly and indirectly, they have suffered greatly from the cutbacks and are aligned with the liberal capitalist Democrats. In contrast with the traditional petty bourgeoisie, they favor government but oppose the greedy rich who are hostile to the welfare state apparatus.

Left-wing rallies in reply to government cutbacks are just beginning to erupt. Pseudo-socialists have already taken leadership of this outbreak, under the banner of populism. The Workers World Party is the most prominent. They raise a basically liberal reform program against "the right" — and

pointedly not against the Democrats. In the absence of middle-class liberals willing to mobilize a mass struggle, even for a program which reflects *their* needs, the farther-left middle-class "socialists" carry out the task for them.

In our last issue, we showed how the WWP was preparing its role in the budding movement. Through its front groups it spurred young activists into building demos in various cities on May 6. Not yet able to capture a movement that is only just developing, the marches largely flopped. Nevertheless, as we warned, they provided a platform for the few liberal Democrats willing to come out at this early stage, most notably Jesse Jackson in California. WWP's own speakers echoed the "poor versus greedy rich" line.

Meanwhile the WWP press issues sucker bait aimed at luring young activists to do the work the liberals won't do.

Although revolutionary Marxists' goal is to establish a socialist society, today we must help forge the broadest unity against a common enemy that has put all the progressive reforms on the chopping block. (Workers World, May 11.)

Of course, the "common enemy" isn't the ruling class; it's the Contract with America, i.e., the Republicans. Not by accident does WWP leave out questions of class. They project that an amorphous movement, not led by or in the interest of any specific class, will automatically become socialist. This never has happened and never will; revolution depends on class consciousness.

The liberal leaders are on the defensive today because they defend a system which has no alternative except the cuts that undermine them. The potential mass movement against the attacks scares them more than the cutbacks, for it could get out of hand. Therefore, they use their far left wing, the socialistic types, to embrace the idea of a populist mass movement. When the mass movement does break out, the liberals will lend their names only if groups like the WWP show them that they can police the ranks and prevent a class explosion. Then more liberal Democrats will decorate the podiums. The pseudo-socialists' populist stage is a barrier against a socialist upheaval, not a path to it.

REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM

Last fall's election gave momentum to the "Republican revolution." That the present right-wing leadership is small didn't prevent it from capitalizing on the hard alternative it offered the radicalizing petty bourgeois and labor aristocracy. Still, the majority of the working class, including even the vast majority of *white* workers, failed to flock to their banner. Most didn't vote. Only 63 percent of Americans are registered; in 1994, only 39 percent of those registered turned out; the Republican edge was 1 percent. That shows that while workers don't trust the Democrats and are angry, they are not embracing the right. Confused, with mixed consciousness, they are desperately looking for answers.

Already a small but significant layer of working class youth, mostly Black and Latino, are embracing the idea of revolution. If they can be won to authentic Marxist class-consciousness, a huge step will have been taken towards recreating the proletarian vanguard party and thereby showing the masses the way to end capitalism's misery.

Authentic communists aim to show revolutionary-minded youth that we must fight all tendencies that lie to our class, supposedly in order to lead people to socialism. Revolutionary workers, as opposed to middle-class do-gooders, do not say just what they think other workers want to hear: we tell

the truth. And the truth is that if the system is not consciously understood and overthrown by the proletariat, it will divide and conquer — us.

It will resort to fascism. White workers will be used against Blacks and Latinos in a race war. Blacks and Latinos will be set at each others' throats. Native-born will be hurled against foreign-born. Jews, Arabs and Asians, serving as scapegoats for capitalism, will face new ovens. American workers will be even more forced to compete, not unite, with workers abroad. And all of us will become cannon-fodder for the next world war. All this, plus poverty and pestilence. Those are the true family values capitalism has in store.

With most of the left caving into populism, revolutionary workers fight to re-create their vanguard party. In the coming mass struggles, we need to emphasize the following slogans to lay the groundwork for fighting for the revolutionary working-class alternative.

Proletarian Socialist Revolution — the Only Solution!

Our program under capitalism can be summed up in two words, "socialist revolution." However, we can best raise the necessity of working-class leadership for the overthrow of capitalism by making our slogan *Proletarian Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!* Given the havoc caused by reformist social democracy and Stalinism in recent times, even advanced workers are often confused about what socialism means. When the masses explode in the near future, centrists will add more revolutionary rhetoric to their current populist line and try to confuse the matter even further.

Populism of any political coloration is always nationalist. At present it is interpenetrated with the jingoism arising from the escalating trade war. The result of any sort of patriotic nationalism is an ideology emphasizing self-sacrifice by the workers, so as to promote the capitalists' "national interest."

In fighting populism we must continually re-assert our internationalism — despite the fact that the majority of workers today are nationalist. Our task is not to blend in with false consciousness but to tell the truth. Our magazine is straightforwardly named *Proletarian Revolution*, and the slogan *Re-Create the Fourth International* appears up front.

Internationalism also demands that revolutionaries stress democratic demands in opposition to the bourgeoisie's rising use of racist divide-and-conquer weapons, both nationally and internationally. We continually warn of the connection between the poisons of racism and national chauvinism. In all cases, we link the necessity to defend oppressed peoples to the fact that dying capitalism cannot maintain national rights. Therefore our slogans include *Smash Racism Through Socialist Revolution!* and *Smash Anti-Immigrant Attacks Through Socialist Revolution!*

Expropriate the Banks and Corporations!

Already reformist/populist misleaders are calling for the capitalist state to "Tax the Banks and Corporations" or "Tax the Rich" — as the way to defend the social gains of the past. And there is an increased gap in income between the bourgeoisie and the working class. But this can't be resolved by a shift to a taxation schedule that would leave intact the capitalists' right to tax us. It does not touch the cause of the problem, capitalist property rights and rule.

As well, as journalist Michael Lind aptly points out:
Average Americans have not only been taxed instead of the rich; they have been taxed to repay the rich. Borrowing, which accounted for only 5.3 percent of federal spending

in the 1960's, increased to 29.9 percent in the 1990s. Interest payments on the debt (which last year amounted to \$203 billion) represent a transfer of wealth from ordinary American taxpayers to rich Americans and foreigners without precedent in history. (Harpers, June 1995.)

The working class is burdened by the massive debt build-up that marks capitalism's crisis. We say, *Repudiate the Debt!* Revolutionaries argue directly for the Marxist answer: expropriation of the banks and corporations, in order to challenge private property rights. Expropriation means that our class won't compensate the capitalists for the seizure of their property. It also frees the working class from personal and state debt repayment to capital.

Tax the Banks, even in the best-case scenario, leads up a dead-end street. Suppose that the working class does succeed in taxing the banks to the extent necessary but does not overthrow the system. Then the banks will either move their monies to friendlier territory — or they will refuse to yield the funds needed for public services, wages, etc. Or they accomplish the same thing by passing the costs of the taxes onto the working class. Capitalism will not permit the banks and corporations to have their profits nullified by taxation, as long as they rule the economy and the state.

General Strike Against Capitalist Attacks!

The immediate action we advocate at this time is a *General Strike to Stop the Capitalist Attacks*. This slogan conveys the power of the working class when united in action against the capitalists. It is a call for the conscious self-activity of the working class on a unified and centralized basis and is intended to counterpose to all the amorphous populist calls for people protest. In conjunction with the general strike action, today we try to popularize the transitional demands *Jobs for All!*, *A Full Public Works Program!*, *A Sliding Scale of Hours!* and *An Escalating Scale of Wages!* These are concrete class-wide solutions to aspects of the capitalist crisis that show the objective basis for working-class unity.

Mass Working Class Armed Self-Defense!

Revolutionaries are militarists. Armed defense of the workers and oppressed from the capitalist state and its armed thugs is an iron necessity. Today the right wing has gained momentum not only in politics in general but in military consciousness. But young Blacks and other revolutionary-minded workers who want to fight the system already recognize the need for arms, an integral part of the revolutionary program.

Given the rise of racism and anti-immigrant attacks at a far greater pace than the general working class response, we call for these communities to form self-defense units whenever possible. Class-wide formations are absolutely necessary to provide lasting defense, yet no group of people under attack can afford to wait for such development. Rather the initiative and example set by Blacks and others must be used to set the example for the working class as a whole.

Build the Revolutionary Party!

Advanced workers must be absolutely clear. The necessary tool for making the revolution is the international revolutionary party. The party embodies the most advanced class consciousness of the proletariat, the class that represents the universal needs of the workers and oppressed everywhere and fights every attempt to divide us by race or nationality. *Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class! Re-Create the Fourth International!* ●

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'War Zone' Battles and the Class War

by Guy Lindsay

This winter, 70 strikers and locked-out workers from the "War Zone" of Central Illinois took a 27-hour bus ride to Florida, to meet with AFL-CIO chief Lane Kirkland and 33 international union heads in the Bal Harbour resort and simply request a solidarity fund. They were not even allowed into the meeting — a graphic symbol of the gulf between beleaguered workers and the cozy group of union tops.

As we have reported before (see "The Class War in Illinois," PR 45), the War Zone is an area which has been beset

mass strike action which could have marked a decisive shift in this "one-sided class war."

Instead, running three scab operations side by side, the U.S. ruling class is using Illinois as a testing ground in the class war it must win if it is to recover from its long-term profits crisis. This war is most visible nationwide in the sharp racist right turn undertaken by Congress, the White House and state governments. But as our lead article points out, the bourgeoisie has to move beyond attacks on the social wage.

Not long ago, during the post-World War II prosperity

Decatur police gas protesters. Lesson: never turn your back on a cop. Answer: armed workers' defense.



by an outstanding number of intense labor battles in the past few years. It shows what is to come for U.S. labor and belies the myth of peace between the classes.

●In June 1993, the A.E. Staley corn processing company locked out the 760 members of UPIU/AIW Local 7837 in a vicious effort to force major concessions and break the union.

●In June 1994, thousands of UAW auto workers at Caterpillar plants in Decatur, nearby Peoria and Aurora once again became part of a nationwide strike.

●In July 1994, 1200 URW rubber workers walked out of the Firestone tire plant in Decatur (now owned by the Japanese Bridgestone company) as part of a nationwide strike involving 4200 workers.

●There have also been strikes by miners, utility workers and teamsters in the region.

The labor leadership has kept all these struggles divided and thereby let them be defeated. At Bridgestone-Firestone, workers have been strong-armed by their union leaders into going back to work. The other struggles are headed toward defeat under their current leaderships. Were it not for the cowardice and bankruptcy of the union leaderships, the giant plants on Decatur's East End would have been shut down by

bubble, a good job at union wages was something that most working-class youth could at least aspire to. Even though only a fraction of the working class actually got such jobs, they set a standard. The cave-in of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy since the capitalist concessions' drive of the early 70's has virtually destroyed the union standard: a good, secure union job is now a thing of the past.

LABOR'S HISTORIC BETRAYAL

But there is a more profound betrayal. The industrial unions, historically a central force in fighting for a whole range of working-class demands, still represent a powerful reservoir for class struggle. If a fight for revolutionary party leadership of the trade unions is not successfully waged, if the unions are not harnessed in the interests of the working class as a whole, the treacherous labor bureaucracy will set up not only the unions for disaster; the fate of the entire working class and oppressed people at large will be at stake. This is how revolutionary-minded workers and youth must understand the importance of the setbacks being handed to industrial workers.

The Illinois struggles offer the final proof that the AFL-

CIO leadership is bankrupt and that workers face an absolute crisis of leadership. In 1981, when Ronald Reagan fired the striking air traffic controllers en masse and destroy their union (PATCO), Kirkland recognized that there was substantial sentiment for a general strike to save PATCO — and openly refused to use this weapon. (See PR 15.) A second major test of the leaders' servility to capital was the Hormel strike centered in Austin, Minnesota in the '80's, stabbed in the back by national unions despite inspiring local militancy.

CATERPILLAR: THE INDUSTRIAL PATCO

A decade after PATCO, the UAW's 1991-92 Caterpillar strike was the first industrial PATCO. Here was an attack, not on a craft union representing only a conservative elite, but on one of the powerhouse unions at the heart of U.S. industrial production. Demanding a two-tier pay scale, speed-up and major benefit cuts, the bosses rejected the tradition of industry-wide bargaining. The workers went on a militant strike, but after Caterpillar started hiring scabs, the union bureaucrats forced the workers to surrender.

After being sent back into the plants, Caterpillar workers lived under conditions of continual harassment, including firings and "discipline" for union activity. Despite the sellout of their past strikes, the workers continued to fight back as best they could, with a series of job actions and walkouts — until another national strike was finally called.

They've been out on strike again for a year. The bosses started with a huge importation of hired scabs, and increasing number of former strikers are now crossing the picket line.



October 1994: 5000 workers at Decatur solidarity march.

While the renewed Caterpillar strike should have been a shot in the arm for all workers in the War Zone, this struggle is now turning into another crushing defeat.

The Bridgestone-Firestone sellout came after the bosses had hired 2300 "replacement workers" earlier this year and taunted that the scabs would be permanent. The union pointed to the scab-herding and union decertification threats and served up large doses of Japan-bashing to appeal for help to American bosses and detour workers' anger into nationalist channels, not class struggle.

But it was of course the union leaders who had held back the struggle all along, falsely promising that Clinton would help by winning legislation to force scabs out of the

plants. These leaders are now calling for the same combination of consumer boycott, "corporate campaign" and in-plant resistance (work-to-rule slowdowns) that failed at Hormel in the mid-'80's, Staley, Caterpillar and everywhere else.

LABOR'S 'OPPOSITION'

With management challenging the basic rights of industrial unions, and given the concentration of industrial strikes around Decatur, the opportunity for a massive, joint action was stunningly posed. But not only did Kirkland & Co. purposely squandered the opportunity: so has every "oppositional" segment of labor's leadership.

A central significance of the Staley battle, in fact, is that, like at Hormel, an oppositional leadership has already had the chance to show its alternative in action — and has failed on every level. Throughout the Staley struggle, for example, the LRP has pointed out many possible actions that "progressive" leaders like Dave Watts, head of Local 7837, could have taken: militant mass pickets to keep out the scabs, calling out fellow unionists at the Archer-Daniel-Midland company, a Staley "competitor" that was actively aiding Staley in its battle against the locked-out workers, etc.

Showing far less class solidarity than the bosses, the leaders relied first on an in-plant strategy as a supposed alternative to striking. Then, when the workers were locked out, the progressives relied on an endless, ineffective "corporate campaign" and consumer boycott (engineered by consultant Ray Rogers, a mastermind of the Hormel sellout), along with civil disobedience acts.

Above all we have focused on the very real opportunity for fighting for a general strike. The local leaders did not operate in isolation but were linked to national "reform" labor leaders like Jerry Tucker, head of the UAW's New Directions caucus, and Ron Carey, president of the Teamsters union (which has continually allowed its workers to cross the Staley picket line.)

But rather than lead the Staley lockout and surrounding struggles on a class-wide basis, the progressives' boycotts, pacifist civil disobedience and rhetoric about corporate greed has been aimed in the opposite direction: to foster the notion that what U.S. workers have in common is that we are essentially powerless victims.

The May 1995 issue of *News from the War Zone*, published by the Staley local, is telling. The misleaders exclude any notion of *industrial* action but provide a laundry list of companies for *consumers* to boycott. This moralist strategy of boycotting "bad" capitalists rather than fighting their system depends on the notion that capitalist America can be made into a just society that will treat its workers right and make profits at the same time.

It is also no surprise that the June 25 "War Zone Rally" in Decatur gives top billing to Democratic Party populist Jesse Jackson. He also pushes a cross-class line relying on illusions in "American" (i.e., capitalist) democracy and justice.

News from the War Zone advertises T-shirts saying "God Bless Union People — America Needs 'Em," complete with a bald eagle. This bit of nationalism ends up contributing to the the union tops' protectionism and Japan-bashing. All such forms of populism open the door to attacks on foreign workers and stepped-up racist scapegoating at home.

Enough of all this capitalist crap! It is critical for working-class fighters to see that the gains workers have historically won, including union rights, can now be defended only as part of a revolutionary struggle. ●

Stressed Out in Detroit

by Bob Wolfe

Given its theme of "Stress and Struggle in the Changing Workplace," the eighth Labor Notes Conference held in Detroit in April had no purpose for workers looking for solutions to the massive capitalist attacks. The conference offered a great deal of stress — but little in the way of struggle.

As I rode a shuttle bus to the airport on the way back from Detroit, a worker from Kansas City wondered out loud, "What was the purpose of the conference?" An OCAW member from Minnesota responded, "I guess we found out other people are getting screwed like we are."

It would be easy enough to dismiss this as the grumblings of conservative, ill-informed unionists. They are not part of the in-group of fake socialists and left bureaucrats working to build the left-reformist wing of the labor bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, they pointed to a dilemma facing the U.S. left as it moves to the right in its effort to reform the labor movement. Having abandoned the Marxist understanding of the revolutionary character of the proletariat, the reformists and centrists substitute the middle-class view of workers as victims. This portrayal assigns the central leadership role to the labor aristocracy and middle-class left saviors.

The bewildered Kansas City unionist could not comprehend a trade union conference of over 1200 people that had no motions or proposals for action and where nothing was decided. He left disappointed, returning to his union empty-handed. He found little consolation in being a "victim," in the opportunity to commiserate with others screwees.

Arising originally out of the rank and filist strategies of the 1970's and '80's, *Labor Notes* magazine has become part of a milieu of union officials and out-bureaucrats looking to reform the AFL-CIO. While its political direction still comes from the "socialist" Solidarity tendency, *Labor Notes* increasingly reflects the outlook of the left bureaucracy. It has achieved success by avoiding hard positions and not raising political programs. This allows it to attract diverse elements on a least common denominator basis, people who want to reverse labor's decline but can't agree on strategy.

The emphasis of *Labor Notes* is on organizing — with politics to come later. Interestingly enough, this approach has been advocated by the leadership of Labor Party Advocates. Not by accident, Bob Wages, president of OCAW, is an LPA leader and a member of *Labor Notes*' Policy Committee.

WAGES LABORS FOR CAPITAL

The largest workshop of the conference was run by LPA, with Wages as featured speaker. He spelled out the line: "build the organization first, decide what it stands for later." He cautioned not to alienate people through political struggle over platforms, particularly controversial issues. When someone asked if LPA was going to take positions on gun control and abortion, Wages responded that these are "hot button" issues that LPA should try to avoid. Instead, he wants LPA to only take positions on clear "class issues."

Wages' position on class reflects the outlook of the labor aristocracy and recalls the politics of Samuel Gompers and his successors. His logic leads to subordinating all questions of oppression — racism, sexism, etc. — on the grounds that they are class-divisive. The roomful of "socialists" — including fake Trotskyists from Socialist Action, Freedom Socialist Party, Socialist Organizer, Labor Militant, Inter-

national Socialist Organization, Solidarity, etc. essentially agrees with Wages' approach, though political etiquette prevents them from being so crassly opportunist.

As well, except for the LRP, no one in the room challenged the strategy of building a reformist labor party. They all accept that in the absence of a real movement based on workers' struggles, the LPA's top-down strategy of winning sections of the labor bureaucracy is the only way to go. Those who claim to have Trotsky's position apparently believe that avoiding discussion on the political character of a labor party makes it open-ended.

When I was called on as the last speaker, I denounced Wages' line. To not see that abortion is a class issue for proletarian women is to understand nothing. I also pointed out that not a single "socialist" in the room had challenged Wages' line for a reformist labor party. We in the LRP follow Trotsky and "say what is." We will not lie to workers and spread illusions that it is possible to reform capitalism. We need a revolutionary party of the working class to make a revolution, not a reformist labor party.

MR. LABOR NOT-SO-MILITANT

At the party that night, while having a beer with one of my comrades, I was approached by a supporter of Labor Militant who denounced my intervention as "pathetic." Here the workers have gathered to build a party for the class — and we piss all over them. When finally I was allowed to respond, I reminded him that the LPA by no means represented the mass of workers but rather a handful of union bureaucrats and left groups defending them. My point at the workshop was that you're building a reformist party, so don't pretend under your other hats to be revolutionaries.

Our Militant man came back with the line that every great revolutionary had stood for a labor party, citing Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. A big mistake. My comrade proceeded to take him apart, pointing out what Lenin and Trotsky really had to say on the question of bourgeois workers' parties. He tried to cut this off, saying he didn't want to hear a "bunch of old quotes." Right, said my comrade, you brought them up to drag them through the mud, but when we point out what they really said, you won't hear it.

We went on to argue for the Leninist approach to reformism and stressed the tactical character of the labor party slogan. It's not a way of life as it has been for Labor Militant, which "entered" the British Labour Party and stayed there for forty years. The LMer departed, soundly thrashed but smirking and chuckling, confident that at this conference at least his interpretation of Marx *et al* was the dominant one.

NON-POLITICAL POLITICS

Sunday morning, two LRP comrades were selling *Proletarian Revolution* outside the main session. Other groups, including the ISO and Labor Militant, were also selling.

Mike Parker, a conference organizer and member of the *Labor Notes* editorial board, began hassling the Labor Militant salesperson. Immediately, the LRP comrades jumped to his defense and basically took it over.

Parker said the idea is to have a broad conference. We're trying to build a labor-centered movement, rather than a movement which is politically-centered. We can't have "political" literature.

What about LPA, the New Party, etc.? we asked. These groups are political and they were given booths. Note: the day before, our request for a literature table had been denied by Kim Moody, another *Labor Notes* honcho, on the grounds that we were a political, not a labor, group. Interestingly enough, there was literature on some tables that included ads for political candidates, including Republicans.

Parker said "Look, I'm not going to argue with you." Our comrade replied, "Good. You can just leave us alone then." Parker scuttled off. We then jumped on the Labor Militant vendor for refusing to play a role in his own defense.

Solidarity polices the left at Labor Notes Conferences in order to maintain its ties with those even further to its right. They're right to fear that bureaucrats and conservative unionists might be scared off by serious political debates at the conference. Yet as the bulk of the left moves to the right, most leftists wind up policing themselves. Groups like Labor Militant want to sell a few papers but will not put up a stink about the anti-communist ban on political literature — because they agree with the "non-political" political approach in the trade unions.

YAWNING OVER SOUTH AFRICA

The most politically advanced discussion took place at the workshop on South Africa given by Abraham Agulhas, president of the South African Chemical Workers Industrial Union. While the talk was tailored to an American trade unionist audience and not to revolutionary workers, the workshop could not help but become a discussion of the revolutionary struggle of the South African working class.

Despite efforts by the chair, Selwyn Rogers of the Black Rank and File Exchange, to turn the meeting into a celebration of the ANC's rise to power, Agulhas's talk proved the pro-capitalist character of the ANC-led Government of National Unity. (See our article on South Africa, p. 15.)

Because of the political character of the talk, many of the closet socialists lowered their trade unionist, rank-and-file masks a few inches. An ISOer tried to solidarize with Agulhas without giving a clear position on the ANC and the South African revolution; he dodged mentioning his tendency's support to the ANC in the elections for the new government. And when an SWPer attempted to defend the ANC by quoting Lenin, only the LRP defended the Leninist position on the capitalist state and the necessity of socialist revolution.

The South African workshop, dealing with the most advanced struggle of revolutionary workers on this planet, drew only about 20 people. While foreign unionists are paraded around to pretend concern for internationalism — Agulhas was the featured speaker at the Saturday night banquet — the conservative nature of the conference tells a different story.

South Africa was once a major topic at trade unionist conferences, but no longer. Now that the political center of gravity there has shifted from liberal anti-apartheid politics to revolutionary working-class struggle, the fake left, wearing their unionist hats and avoiding ideas like revolution and socialism like the plague, has less interest.

A TRUE CONFESSION

Given all this, why should communists bother going to Labor Notes conferences? Certainly not to join the fake left and its maneuveristic, opportunist politics. Rather, we go as opponents of reformism and centrism, to learn about our political opponents and to intervene as representatives of the revolutionary interests of the working class. We recognize the

danger that reformists and centrists have historically provided cadres for the labor bureaucracy. Labor Notes, LPA and the rest are training grounds for new layers of bureaucrats.

We go for the very reason the rest of the left hates our presence: to call things by their right names and to expose the pretenses and illusions of those who would mislead the working class. And, I must confess, I can't help but enjoy making the fake socialists squirm every once in a while. You know, that Labor Militant guy never disputed my argument that LPA was building a reformist party. ●

Corrections and Amplifications

In our previous issue's article on Haiti, we published a misformulated accusation against two left organizations:

The Stalinist-tailing Spartacist League and Bolshevik Tendency (BT) . . . invoke the Cuban "workers' state" in order to leave the impression that Castro will support a Haitian revolution. As Castro himself makes clear, nothing could be further from reality.

Members of the BT have protested this statement, on the grounds that while they regard Cuba as a workers' state, they consider Castro's government to be Stalinist and do not think he would give revolutionary support to the Haitian masses.

Our statement was based on remarks made by BTers at an LRP forum at City College in October 1994. Our speaker stressed our opposition to the U.S. occupation of Haiti and to the Aristide government's collaboration with it. The BTers agreed on these points, but added that the Haitian masses could look to support from "the Cuban revolution."

Moreover, the notion that the Stalinist regimes are progressive and can defend the masses' gains follows from the "workers' state" theory. The BT, which endorsed Jaruzelski's suppression of the Polish working class in 1981 (as did the Spartacists) and the anti-Gorbachev putsch in 1991, clearly has such illusions in some Stalinist leaders.

Nevertheless, we were wrong to suggest that the BT meant to imply Castro would support the Haitian masses, so we withdraw the charge.

We also withdraw our charge in the case of the Spartacists because they have not specifically written that Cuba would support Haiti — although their press is full of praise for Cuba as a revolutionary beacon and champion of the oppressed in Latin America and Africa. In any case, we run into the SL often in our political work, and they have *not* challenged our characterization of their views on this matter.

SLers have, however, challenged our accusation that they urged a different Stalinist regime to come to the aid of a beleaguered revolution in a very different way. Our LRP Bulletin for their debate with Ernest Mandel last November said:

In 1979 *Workers Vanguard* called for a Russian nuclear attack on China — a "workers' state"! — during its invasion of Vietnam.

One Chicago Spartacist was so irate at this "slander" that he vowed to eat our bulletin if we could prove it. In fact, *Workers Vanguard* wrote on March 2, 1979:

As for Moscow's ultimate option, there is much it could do to bring China around if Brezhnev & Co. were really committed to the international solidarity they cynically profess. Peking has an extremely narrow nuclear establishment, all of it targeted by the USSR. Likewise the Chinese oil industry is extremely vulnerable even to a surgical attack by conventional forces in Sinkiang and Manchuria.

Bon appétit, comrade. ●

ISO Polices the Left

by Guy Lindsay

On April Fools Day, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) held a public meeting at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. The joke was on the "public" — including the ISO's membership and its political opponents.

Echoing traditional Stalinist measures to silence political discussion, the ISO prevented other socialists and activists from participating in the "discussion period" that followed the much-publicized talk by Alex Callinicos, a leader of the ISO's British affiliate. This forum, following a weekend internal educational, was a real special occasion for the ISO. However, in a long talk dedicated to "revolution vs. reform," Callinicos managed to avoid ever citing the specific need for a revolutionary party, ending instead with an amorphous call for "revolutionary organization."

The meeting was supposedly open to the public. For an allegedly socialist organization, that means that basic norms of working-class democracy should apply. This should mean, minimally, that people outside the ISO should get to participate in the discussion — political opponents included.

However, as the talk concluded, those not in the know (i.e., not in the ISO) watched people in the audience give slips of paper to runners in the aisle, who in turn presented them to a seasoned ISO hack. After sifting through the slips (and checking them twice), the hack sent the appropriate slips up to the stage.

Then the chair explained the rules of the game — after the ISO had accumulated enough slips to virtually insure the non-participation of its opponents. The few non-ISOers present were then invited to ask for slips. This was done chiefly to aid the ISO's political censorship: "Who are you and what is your question?"

POLITICAL HYPOCRISY

Does the ISO have so little confidence in its program that it has to adopt Stalinist bureaucratic norms? Does it believe that a top leader of its international tendency could not have weathered a two-minute intervention by an opponent? Apparently so!

Perhaps the ISO hoped to avoid the kind of discomfort that occurred at their February 23 meeting in Chicago after a talk on the Malcolm X. A speaker from the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) had criticized the ISO for its hypocrisy in lauding Malcolm, a champion of armed self-defense, while refusing in practice to support Malcolm's stand on self-defense, the police and the capitalist state.

We cited their participation in a demonstration against police brutality in Chicago in November as one example. The LRP raised mass armed self defense as a slogan — and the ISO shouted us down. We also pointed to their practice of leading supporters into police-controlled protest pens at a number of demonstrations. We noted their support for the illusory demand of civilian review boards to control cop violence. (See the COFI/LRP report in *PR* 47.)

The ISO's growing apparatus of mind-dead functionaries is in training to serve as hunting dogs for the left labor bureaucracy. They disdain the necessary hard, open political struggle over the questions which our class must address in the course of forging the party of socialist revolution.

This was pretty evident in the lifeless charade which followed Callinicos' talk. The ISOers called repeatedly on

themselves. Eventually one student had enough of listening to the sound of one hand clapping and angrily asked whether there would be an open discussion: "are we just going to listen to the ISO read prepared speeches?" LRPers joined in this protest, demanding that the ISO call on people from the floor. If you're going to exclude the audience, do it openly!

One LRP supporter even tried to play by the rules: he filled out a "speaker's slip." He was not called on, however, as the chair reported that we had regrettably "run out of time." Funny how time flies when your apparatchiks speak for five minutes apiece, as always ignoring the ISO's own two-minute time limit. This device is just a weapon in case an opponent manages to get called on. Having little use for this charade, the LRPer rose to loudly and vigorously denounce these blatantly bureaucratic methods.

As the meeting broke up, a squad of ISO goons pursued the LRP and others out into the hall. Their hall monitors surrounded supporters of the LRP and News & Letters who were distributing literature outside the meeting, and the ISO ordered its opponents to leave the hall. In the ensuing "discussion," the LRP condemned the ISO for its political cowardice. For its part, the ISO labeled our behavior "rude," "disruptive" and even "insane."

This takes chutzpah. But the ISO hopes that the big lie will stick, in its largely middle-class student milieu where many activists are inclined to go along with petty-bourgeois notions of decorum — for now. The only fortunate thing that can be said about the whole episode is that some healthier elements in the ISO were chilled by this example of thuggery.

POLITICAL POLICE

The ISO's sectarian behavior is nothing new. In New York, as we've previously reported, the ISO not only bars the LRP from its meetings, it has also started using superior numbers to forcibly prevent us from entering the buildings where their events are held.

According to other leftists' reports, the ISO has a similar policy of political exclusion for the Spartacist League and the Revolutionary Workers' League. In Chicago, the ISO called on campus security to prevent these two groups from attending an anti-war meeting at Loyola University in 1991. And last year, the ISO physically attacked a small group of Spartacist supporters who were selling their newspaper outside an ISO meeting in Boston.

For all its talk about "socialism from below," the ISO's behavior towards left opponents is modeled after the political functioning of union bureaucrats. Its approach to winning and "training" contacts stresses organizational loyalty rather than political understanding and agreement. This says, in effect, "We're the revolutionary group because we know how to operate." Under such a regime, promising radicals are quickly turned into hacks.

Leninists take the opposite approach: the program defines the party. The LRP seeks to win the best working-class fighters on the basis of political and programmatic unity. This means, among other things, that we *encourage* our contacts to understand the politics of our opponents. A genuine revolutionary party must be the material expression of advanced class consciousness. The creation of a vanguard depends on fully understanding and developing the communist program. This cannot be done without political combat. ●

Debating The Life and Death of Stalinism, Part 2: Workers Power's Moribund Theory

by Arthur Rymer

In the previous issue we began our reply to the British Workers Power group's review of our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory* by Walter Daum. WP challenges our analysis that the Stalinist system was a statified form of capitalism, countering with their own variant of pseudo-Trotskyism — the theory that the USSR survived the Stalinist counterrevolution as a workers' state and spawned a dozen more "workers' states" across East Europe and Asia without a single proletarian revolution.

Unlike most far-left theorists of such "deformed (or degenerate) workers' states," Workers Power and their international co-thinkers in LRCI believe that all the states (except East Germany) remain workers' states, even after the collapse of Stalinism. Holding on to an indefensible theory past its last gasp, they introduce a new wrinkle, the label "moribund workers' states."

The first part of this article dealt with the nature of the law of value for capitalist economies analyzed by Marx and how it applied to the Soviet Union. We also took up the nature of a revolutionary workers' state transitional from capitalism to socialism, as was the USSR after the proletarian revolution of 1917. We showed that the key force driving a workers' state economy against the surviving law of value is the development of proletarian consciousness. WP, echoing the early Soviet economist Evgeny Preobrazhensky, thinks it is a blind "law of primitive socialist accumulation."

In Part 2 we consider the Stalinist counterrevolution of the 1930's, the post-World War II years of Stalinist power and the nature of post-Stalinism. We discuss Workers

Power's methodology and the link between their notion that Stalinism represents a gain for the working class and their theory and practice toward social-democratic reformism at home. This brings us back to the theory of a peaceful social counterrevolution in Eastern Europe, criticized in Part 1.

EVIDENCE OF COUNTERREVOLUTION?

Workers' Power sneers at our book's account of the Stalinist social counterrevolution in the late 1930's. Against our view that in that period the Soviet economy was turned toward exploitation and competition, on the road to the final expropriation of the proletariat, Workers Power insists that "No qualitative changes took place in the economy of the Soviet Union between 1936 and 1939":

What happened in this period was that Stalin eradicated all opposition and finally dominated a regime which had, by trial and error, developed a means of extracting sufficient production from the statified economy to maintain itself.

To write that Stalin extracted production from "the economy" amounts to accepting the bureaucratic outlook and hiding the system's class content. Does that mean he squeezed "the economy" harder, drove "the economy" into slave labor camps, etc., etc.? Workers know better, and people calling themselves "Workers' Power" ought to recognize that such "extracting" means introducing and intensifying exploitation of the working class.

Moreover, organizing production by "trial and error" doesn't say much for the introduction of scientific planning and the suppression of the law of value that characterized

Correction: Trotsky on Stalinism

In Part 1 of this article we took up Trotsky's final conception of Stalinism as a dying system. In showing the fundamental clash between Trotsky's method and the supposedly orthodox view of "workers' statist" like Workers Power, we went too far in condensing the discussion — especially for readers unfamiliar with the analysis in our book and many past articles. We wrote:

We agreed with Trotsky that Stalinism was fundamentally a weak, ephemeral phenomena. As a system it was a deformed capitalism that could not coexist with the remaining gains of the workers' revolution. Trotsky thought Stalin's USSR too unstable to survive the World War; his error was not to see that the capitalist counterrevolution he foresaw had already occurred. It temporarily strengthened the ruling bureaucracy by imposing a terrible defeat on the proletariat.

Our point is that although Trotsky said the great purges indicated a civil war, he thought they reflected the increasing weakness of the degenerating workers' state. Therefore he predicted that Stalinism would be overthrown in the coming world war — either by workers' revolution or capitalist restoration.

That assessment proved wrong. Trotsky overlooked that the Stalinists had turned themselves into a ruling class through a historic defeat of the working class — a full capitalist counterrevolution. This class defeat bolstered Stalinism enough to betray struggles internationally in the next few decades.

While this period was ephemeral on the scale of history, it did demonstrate a strengthened Stalinism which Trotsky's hypothesis couldn't account for — and which shows that he was mistaken. We agree with Trotsky that Stalinism was a fundamentally weak system, but it became a question of its fundamental weakness as a deformed capitalism, something Trotsky did not see.

As our book summed up:

Having erased the last vestiges of workers' power in the state apparatus, party and army, the regime did not collapse in World War II, as Trotsky expected, but rather consolidated its power. Nevertheless, Trotsky's position looks insightful today, and it is in no way understood by his epigones: the Stalinist system, after a delay of several decades, is proving to be as weak as Trotsky foresaw — for different but related reasons.

Stalin's transformation of the USSR, according to WP.

WP falsely claims that we cite just one source to back up our view that "planning" was not the essence of the Stalinist economy. In fact there is a wealth of material. For example, the one quotation they acknowledge is immediately followed by a citation from a leading study of Soviet planning:

Within each ministry, enterprises competed fiercely for a privileged status, for reasonable quotas, and for easy orders. The same sort of competition existed on a lower level within each enterprise and on a higher level among ministries. The jungle of liberal capitalism of the past looks like a fencing tournament in comparison with this sordid infighting for influence interspersed with negotiations, shady deals and blackmail. (Eugene Zaleski, *Planning for Economic Growth in the Soviet Union*, 1962.)

This was written about the USSR in the 1930's, right after Stalin had supposedly subdued the law of value and the capitalist competition and rivalries it generates!

Next, WP claims that our book contradicts itself: the Stalinist economy depends both on competition, and, alternatively, on administration by fiat. But this is no contradiction. We never argued that the Stalinist stultified economy depended as much on competition as does traditional capitalism; in fact, our theory shows that Stalinism's limits on competition undermined its efficiency in exploiting workers.

But we have always said that competition among individual capitalists is a reflection of the system's drive to accumulate capital. Under Stalinism, competition among the bureaucrats was evidence that they were beginning to act like a capitalist class, with each bureaucrat dependent on his own specific role in the economy or government. Further, when we say that the so-called planning was "in reality administration by fiat," we (unlike WP) never credited the bureaucrats with the ability to actually carry out their dictates; the book argues extensively otherwise. The bureaucrats issued their quotas — and the law of value instead saw to it that actual production occurred according to its own predictable dictates. Our supposed contradiction exists only in the crossed eyes of the WP beholders.

Nevertheless, WP tries to wax ironic:

"Marxists of every stripe," we are told, "have overlooked the decentralist tendencies emerging in the midst of political centralization and national planning." Only comrade Daum, it seems, realized that "the heart of the matter was the intensification of the struggle over surplus value and accumulation." With such insight, who needs evidence?

All the evidence in the world won't satisfy people who deny the class struggle. Our book cites Stakhanovism, "socialist emulation," piecemeal and the like, and any working-class fighter can understand what this meant. But WP ignores it. Why not, if Stalinism was squeezing production "from the economy," not from human proletarians?

Far from any lack of proof of "the intensification of the struggle over surplus value and accumulation," our book piles on the evidence. Whereas Workers Power not only denies any significant turn in the economy, it also refuses to see the decisive political transformations carried out by the counter-revolution. For example, the legal changes expressed in the 1936 Constitution removed the electoral advantages for the working class established as a result of the 1917 revolution — the final step in Stalinism's obliteration of proletarian democracy. As Trotsky put it, this meant "juridically liquidating the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The Great Purges of the period consolidated Stalinism's

counterrevolution. What Trotsky termed a "preventive civil war" exterminated anyone with the remotest ties to the October revolution or with the potential to oppose Stalin. A new bureaucracy to replace the murdered communists became crystallized as a capitalist class ruling over the toilers.

More than twenty years of proletarian dictatorship had expanded the Soviet economy tremendously, showing the



Unlike Workers Power, Lenin never saw reformism as a partial workers' gain. He fought to sweep away all counter-revolutionary garbage.

power of a workers' state even when usurped by counterrevolutionaries. Our analysis is unique in explaining why the result was a *weaker* variant of capitalism after the 1930's, deformed by the gains of the workers' revolution which Stalinism could not completely eradicate.

And we did indeed stand on this in opposition to "Marxists of every stripe." Workers Power, like other pseudo-Trotskyists, considers Stalinism to be an expanding system that produced "bureaucratic social revolutions" in half of Europe and much of Asia after World War II. WP has a left variant: their 1982 book on Stalinism states that the system's advance toward socialism was "blocked and thrown into reverse." But it also extols "the dynamism of the plan that does exist", claiming that:

... this frees degenerate workers' states from the yoke of imperialism and facilitates growth rates that are unthinkable in imperialized countries ... (*The Degenerated Revolu-*

tion, pp. 92-3.)

That is, their theory denies that the bureaucratic system was economically stagnant (and overlooked the declining growth rates already well apparent in the Stalinist countries). So they cannot see that it was driven by its own inherent momentum to intensify capitalist exploitation of the workers, and therefore to devolve towards traditional bourgeois forms.

STALINIST CAPITALISM

Workers Power continues its self-embarrassing mockery in challenging our view of the post-World War II USSR.

The heart of the chapter devoted to "Stalinist Capitalism" is a comparison of the supposed characteristics of state capitalism with various well-known features of the Soviet economy. . . . At one level, this approach is laughable. It is asserting an equal content on the basis of an entirely superficial formal comparison that is highly contentious and for which absolutely no evidence is given.

WP ignores the central theoretical section of the chapter — on the law of value under Stalinism, hardly the approach of a "superficial formal comparison"! WP omits key characteristics of the Stalinist system that reflect capitalism's laws of motion. We discuss the declining growth rates of the Soviet economy after the counterrevolution and link this phenomenon to the dominance of the falling rate of profit tendency, characteristic of capitalism in its epoch of decay. Even in a section of their review entitled "The inner laws of Soviet state capitalism," WP simply dodges dealing with the fact of the steadily declining rate of accumulation, which neither Trotsky nor any of his epigones foresaw.

Indeed, it is WP which, like the other epigones, observes the formal features of the Stalinist economy differing from those of the West — and therefore assumes the content and dynamics were qualitatively different. As well, it is WP which sees "an equal content" between the degenerating workers' state of the mid-'30's that Trotsky described and the capitalist state that usurped it:

As Trotsky pointed out, it [over-concentration on extensive development] is also an inevitable consequence of bureaucratic control of a degenerate workers' state. The same can be said for lousy standards of consumer production, for the failures of planning, for the continuing social inequality of women — all features presented by Daum as definitive proof of the capitalist nature of the Soviet Union.

We present these features not as proof of Soviet capitalism but as confirmation. Our book argues that while the forms differed, the laws of motion in operation demonstrated the workings of a capitalist system in essence and led to the consequences listed. By looking at the motion of the society, not a snapshot, we saw that the reactionary, anti-working class features spawned by the degeneration of the workers' state intensified during and after the social counterrevolution.

But for Workers Power:

Such phenomena are entirely compatible with the characterization of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state. In fact the degenerated workers' state analysis enables us to understand these phenomena better.

Yeah, sure. WP's own book on Stalinism offered no analysis at all of the laws of motion of the Stalinist economy. Indeed, its introduction admitted:

While this document deals with the origin and nature of the Stalinist states, it does not deal with their development as degenerate workers' states. . . . Do [the Stalinist economies] follow cyclical patterns? What is the nature of their

crises? . . . These questions are vital ones to answer. . . . We have not yet carried out the vast amount of work required before such questions can be properly answered. (p. 2.)

They still have no answer to the fundamental question of what laws govern the motion and development of Stalinist society, years after its eclipse. Nor do they deal with — or even mention — our answer. For example, our book explains in detail how the cyclical patterns of the economic cycle are suppressed under Stalinism, one reason why these economies were highly inefficient. This is the basis for seeing why Stalinist economy was in permanent crisis, and therefore why its collapse was predictable to real Marxists.

On the other hand, WP also has to explain why Stalinism — for Trotsky, a bureaucratically disfigured society that could not survive the coming World War II — managed not only to triumph in the war but also to conquer half of Europe. In our book, the key was the consolidation of a new ruling class:

The basis for its resilience was the counterrevolution in the USSR, which gave the bureaucracy class power and its own national capital, enabling it to serve as a shareholder and bulwark of imperialism as a whole. (p. 247.)

For Workers Power, Stalinism's survival has no fundamental explanation; it simply managed to muddle through.

The bureaucracy evolved a number of pragmatic methods for dealing with the errors inevitably caused by its methods of planning. . . . Trotsky's assumption, that the economic dislocations caused by bureaucratic planning would eventually reach a pitch where economic collapse would cause the downfall of the regime, was offset by developments of which he appears to have known nothing.

What were those "pragmatic" developments that Trotsky knew nothing of? WP cites "the creation of a network of Gosplan plenipotentiaries who were empowered to take whatever action they thought necessary to complete projects that had been prioritized by the political leadership." Where Trotsky saw the bureaucracy as parasitic and unable to stave off capitalist inroads, Workers Power sees a layer of omnipotent officials who could overcome decay and prevent collapse.

In reality there was no such *deus ex machina*. The added layer of bureaucrats couldn't solve the insoluble problems of bureaucratic planning. Production slackened and grew even more wasteful; the planning apparatus became even less functional. WP's answer shares the normative bureaucratic response to all bureaucratic problems — add another layer of bureaucratic overseers. As Trotsky would have informed his epigones, there was no bureaucratic answer to the degeneration; the imminent choice was capitalist restoration or international proletarian revolution, nothing else.

The USSR was already stronger than Trotsky saw. It was more able to enforce its exploitation of the workers, despite its increasingly decrepit economy — because, for the time being, it had resolved the central class contradiction he pointed to. Stalinism had already completed the capitalist counterrevolution.

After 1989, it is really odd to see a theory desperately trying to account for Stalinism's strength without coming to grips with its now-obvious underlying weakness! As we noted in Part 1, Workers Power's review barely mentions the downfall of the system, a decisive test for any theory of Stalinism.

POST-STALINISM

By now it is obvious to almost all that Stalinism is dead. Most pseudo-Trotskyists try to salvage something from their "theory" by citing Trotsky's forewarning of Stalinist collapse

and chanting, "See? Trotsky was right!" — without accounting for Stalinist power lasting over 50 years. WP is in the unenviable position of having to "correct" Trotsky in order to say that the Stalinist (or post-Stalinist) proletarian economy still holds out against capitalism.

In 1989 LRCI defended its claim that the USSR and East Europe were workers' states by arguing that planning survived. Here they write retrospectively:

We emphasized that the decisive moment of restoration [of capitalism] would be seen in the final destruction of the relations of planned economy, which for a whole period survived the formal abolition of centralized output-setting agencies, and took refuge in *ad hoc* arrangements between and within key industrial enterprises and the barely reformed banking system. (*Trotskyist International* 15, p. 33.)

In their review, Workers Power hails "trial and error" as a method of planning — here it's "ad hoc arrangements." The inanity of this entire line was shown when LRCI abandoned it and produced the opposite view in 1994:

The dominant sector of the state-owned economy continues to function, temporarily, on a non-commercial and non-capitalist basis. However, it is no longer actively organized by the institutions of bureaucratic planning. The dismantling of planning, linked with the difficulties in forming a new bourgeoisie (and thus with the formation of a bourgeois state) is manifest in the spectacular collapse of production. (*TI* 15, p. 18.)

In one version, planning survives (sort of); in another, it has been dismantled; either way, WP/LRCI concludes that capitalism does not exist. Reagan wasn't the only practitioner of voodoo economics. There is a reason why WP maintains Stalinism in zombie form, "moribund" yet alive; we will deal with it shortly.

Workers Power's demand for evidence that Stalinism is capitalist is especially ironic today, when even their own press supplies illustrations. For example, the June 1994 issue of their paper said of China's Special Enterprise Zones:

Most of the industries are semi-skilled, labor-intensive and very environmentally "unfriendly." ... These industries employ mainly female, migrant labor from inland China. Workers are regimented and housed in overcrowded dormitories. Working hours are long and conditions are atrocious. In one factory the women work 15 hours a day with just one day off per month!

Such are the conditions of working-class life in a "workers' state," which supposedly defends the workers' gains.

Another LRCI article refers to a "new super-exploited Chinese working class which has been forced to work under primitive and hazardous nineteenth-century sweatshop condi-

tions." (*Trotskyist International* No. 15.) Apparently even super-exploitation is among the "phenomena ... entirely compatible" with degenerated workers' states and has no inherent connection with capitalism.

PREOBRAZHENSKY REVISITED

To understand how they can dig themselves into such a trap, we have to investigate Workers Power's methodology. To begin, we go back to Preobrazhensky.

In Part 1 of our response, we noted that the WP review dwells on the seemingly diversionary question of Preobrazhensky's law of primitive socialist accumulation. WP needs to tie his outlook, which they identify with, to Trotsky, in order to untruthfully give Bolshevik authority to their substitution of objective laws for revolutionary proletarian consciousness in the transition to socialism. That is why they accuse us of falsely inventing a rift between the two.

Despite WP's contemptible attempt at covering it up, the rift was real and profound. It is now commonly known to those who have seriously studied the economic outlook of the Left Opposition. Richard B. Day, a well known scholarly specialist in the field, has studied Trotsky's archives. He writes that the documents reveal that Trotsky "was apprehensive of Preobrazhensky's work by 1926-27." ("Trotsky and Preobrazhensky: The Troubled Unity of the Left Opposition," in *Studies of Comparative Communism*, 1977.)

Day went on to state that "All of the differences between Trotsky and Preobrazhensky converged on this central question of the world law of value":

According to Preobrazhensky, the world law of value no longer operated in the era of monopoly capitalism. It had been displaced by trusts, syndicates, and cartels. The rate of profit no longer tended to be equalized ...

Looking at the question from the vantage point of the workers' state, Day adds:

The principal point ... was that by denying any regulating role to the law of value in the Soviet economy Preobrazhensky had in effect denied the unity and interdependence of the world economy as a whole. In so doing, he effectively denied any lasting significance to the international division of labor, which Trotsky considered to be the objective basis of proletarian internationalism.

Day points out that Preobrazhensky was inconsistent: he held that the world law of value had ended with imperialism and monopoly, but then discussed its possible effects on the USSR. In contrast to Preobrazhensky, Trotsky insisted over and over again: "We are part of the world economy."

For Trotsky, the law of value, dominating the world economy, would force the imperialist powers to trade with

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and invest in the USSR. This relation was critical to Soviet development, to both the quality and quantity of the commodities produced. Thus it was vital to enable the workers' state to survive until the revolution was successful in the advanced countries. Trotsky argued that Moscow's monopoly of foreign trade was necessary — but it could only regulate the impact of the law of value internally; it could not eliminate it. Consequently, costs and quality of commodities inside the Soviet Union would have to relate to world standards.

The misnamed "law of primitive socialist accumulation" attempted to describe the unequal exchange actually existing in the USSR. In the 1920's, this meant that the exchange of manufactured goods by the urban workers with the agricultural goods of the peasantry was inherently unequal, to the benefit of the workers. It provided a surplus to be invested in industry. But Trotsky feared that if the inequality became too great, if the products traded to the peasants were too expensive or too poor in quality, then the peasants and the imperialists would inevitably forge a trade link and destroy the state monopoly of foreign trade. Then the law of value would completely dominate the Soviet economy, and the workers' state would be lost.

Preobrazhensky had no such worry, since he denied the operation of the law of value inside the USSR. Consequently, he could accept soaking the peasantry and a more rapid industrialization than could Trotsky. Trotsky proved correct: in the 1930's Stalin's "revolution from above" subordinated the workers to the law of value — in a more direct way than Trotsky had expected.

Preobrazhensky's view that an isolated workers' state could escape the world law of value, or at least suppress its operation within the national borders, laid the basis for his reconciliation with economic nationalism, autarky and finally Stalin's nationalist "socialism in one country." In fact, in sharp contrast with Trotsky and even before Stalin's ideas jelled, he wrote about "two systems of world economy."

Workers Power shares the same attitude, in that they attack us for maintaining that the economy of the transitional workers' state is still a part of the capitalist world economy, its stage of history, and not yet a separate system free from bourgeois laws of motion. This understanding is not only ours; we share it with Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. And as shown in Part 1, WP's denial means that their view of the workers' state, like Preobrazhensky's, is also nationalist.

NATIONALIZATION AND REFORMISM

It is not just a question of the law of value in an isolated workers' state. As noted in Part 1, Workers Power refuses to understand the law of value as a law of *unequal* exchange. All they see is the surface appearance, the genesis of the law in equal exchange. The same was true of Preobrazhensky: on discovering that unequal exchange dominated the world economy, he held that the international law of value was defunct.

Workers Power has similar if not identical ideas. That is why their argument with us over Preobrazhensky begins not with his analysis of the workers' state but with his views on the law of value *under capitalism*. WP defends Preobrazhensky's theory that capitalism eliminates the law of value from crucial areas of its economy. They claim:

The central point about any discussion of the law of value under "state capitalism" is this: capitalism is capable of spontaneously negating the law of value in whole industries and for whole periods. But the function of this is to preserve the operation of the law of value as a whole, as

the guiding mechanism of the capitalist economy.

Marx is turned bottomsides up and lo! he is thereby made to look like Eduard Bernstein. For WP, the law of value, a central and driving law of capitalism, ends where statification begins. The fact that WP says that this "spontaneous" act by capitalism itself occurs on an industry-by-industry basis does not prevent this notion from being a pseudo-revolutionary defense of the social democratic theory of the peaceful transformation to socialism.

Social democratic theory itself stresses an incremental process of transformation to socialism via statification. In order to tail reformism but keep a revolutionary cover, WP says that the process, albeit piecemeal, serves to preserve capitalism overall and can't go all the way to socialism. It means that reformism, however evil-intentioned, is capable of terminating capitalist laws — even if only sectorally, temporarily and slowly. Objectively it has to be progressive. "Revolutionaries" will pick up where the reformist non-revolutionary transformation leaves off and unspontaneously complete the process. Thus WP artificially preserves a role for itself at the end of the transformation, after riding piggy-back on social democracy along the way.

For authentic Marxists, in contrast, eliminating the law of value, rooted as it is in production, would mean the end of capitalist exploitation of the working class. WP, like its ancestor Preobrazhensky, knows the law is important to capitalism but cannot see the consequences of the incredible notion of its spontaneous capitalist elimination.

CAPITALISM AND STATE CAPITALISM

Workers Power evolved out of the International Socialism tendency, and it still bears the birthmarks of Tony Cliff's version of "state capitalism" — actually a third-system theory. In contrast to Trotsky, Cliff thought that Stalin had eliminated the law of value in the Soviet Union. The law of value functioned externally on the world market and thereby configured the USSR as capitalist. The more serious "workers' state" advocates easily lampooned the idea of capitalism without an internal law of value, "a clock without a spring." Such a conception meant that there was no working class, no value-producing class in the "capitalist" USSR.

Preobrazhensky and Workers Power have the same basic notion as Cliff, not simply about the law of value and the USSR but about traditional capitalism as well. The idea that major sections of the capitalist economy do not operate on the basis of value production would mean that the working class has disappeared from major nationalized, regulated and planned industries under capitalism. The doctrine of "spontaneously negating" the law of value is sucked from WP's thumb in order to defend its Russian model. It exists nowhere in Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky — or in reality.

In reality, reformists nationalize an industry in order to save it and placate the workers. In that sense the form represents concessions won by the working class. But the content remains capitalist. That is why, oddly enough, the nationalized and planned industries behave according to the same economic laws as the others. For example, the British government cuts and otherwise attacks the workers in the state-owned railroads and mines, for the same reasons that private capitalists do in their industries. Competition is given as the justification in both cases. The underlying reason in both cases, dictated by the value relation and the laws of capitalist production that follow from it, is that capital has to wring out more surplus value in order to expand.

FATALIST DETERMINISM

WP's bowing to the objective process of self-destruction of the law of value under capitalism, which forces reformist misleaders along the road to socialism, is similar to Preobrazhensky's objectivist law of primitive socialist accumulation that supposedly forced Stalinist leaders along.

Isaac Deutscher, Trotsky's biographer and himself a cynical fatalist, could nevertheless see that Trotsky distanced himself from Preobrazhensky's obvious fatalistic determinism. In *The Prophet Unarmed*, Deutscher details the nationalist potential in Preobrazhensky's thought, and comments:

Nor could Trotsky agree with Preobrazhensky about the "objective force" or logic of primitive accumulation which would impose itself on the party leaders and make them its agents, regardless of what they thought and intended. This was a view which must have appeared to Trotsky to be too rigidly deterministic, even fatalistic, and to rely too much on the automatic development of socialism and too little on the consciousness, the will, and the action of fighting men. (p. 238)

Trotsky certainly did object to the view that the Stalinist bureaucrats would be forced to carry out a correct policy because of an automatic law of socialist accumulation. Nevertheless, in the post-World War II years many of his would-be followers invested Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution with such an objectivist determinism. Stalinism was supposedly forced by the logic of permanent revolution into creating workers' states, regardless of the role of the actual working class. This form of determinism is always a cover for subjective capitulation, and in this case it was a theoretical justification for a centrist adaptation to Stalinism.

In practice, the notion of permanent revolution as objectively determinist denies the critical importance of proletarian consciousness in making the socialist revolution. Likewise, most pseudo-Leninists today believe that socialist ideas come from the intelligentsia, who provide the brainwork for the proletariat's muscle. For such types, "socialist planning" is a technical and specialized function engaged in by sincerely dedicated experts.

Authentic communists, in contrast, believe that the working class itself is quite capable of coming to socialist class consciousness on its own. Marx insisted on it in *The German Ideology*. Trotsky not only showed that Lenin had come to agree with this proposition but himself repeatedly attacked the idea that socialist consciousness came from the intellectuals. Workers Power, together with many others, always ignores our challenge to even mention their disagreement with Trotsky on this crucial class issue — let alone argue with him on it.

The capitalist class was not conscious of the nature of the bourgeois revolution. However, the socialist revolution can only be a conscious revolution. The capitalist system *does* operate on the basis of immanent, automatic and deterministic laws like the law of value. Socialist revolution fights to establish a system based upon humanity's conscious control over the world. During the period of the transitional workers' state, proletarian planning — that is, the conscious planning of the working class — develops apace, as it is increasingly able to accelerate accumulation and overcome the economic laws determined by scarcity.

It is the working class, led by the most conscious Bolsheviks, the advanced workers, which determines the planning. Specialists are utilized for their inputs, their expertise, their knowledge. The middle-class "Marxists" see

the world according to their class vantage point, upside down. That is why the intellectuals and specialists who do become Marxists know that they have break with their previous class outlook and prove to the workers that they do look upon their tasks from the inherent interests of the proletariat.

THE EPOCH OF CAPITALIST DECAY

Capitalism intensifies stratification in the forms of regulation, nationalization and planning as capitals grow larger and more monopolized in the present epoch of capitalist decay. Moreover, as our book puts it:

Once the developed proletariat appears on the scene as a potential alternative, the bourgeoisie turns to centralization in the political sphere as well as the economic. Surplus value has to be turned away from productive accumulation and expended increasingly on means of repression. Measures have to be taken to forestall new crises, lest turbulence and additional misery drive the masses to revolution; these measures inevitably weaken the system's growth. The state apparatus expands to control and (in part) buy off the masses; militarization and nationalism are stepped up to divert the class struggle; ideologies like racism and the sanctity of the family are broadcast to keep the proletariat divided; ultimately the bourgeoisie turns to

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF STALINISM

A Resurrection of Marxist Theory
by Walter Daum

The Marxist analysis of Stalinism that makes today's events understandable and shows the working-class way forward.

A thoughtful, and indeed in many ways, an ideologically exciting book. Whether you accept its main thesis or not, and . . . this reviewer does not, it will still challenge your presuppositions and force you to rethink your ideas from top to bottom in the most rigorous way. And unlike most would-be Marxist texts these days, it is written in intelligible English, which is no small gain as well. *Al Richardson, Revolutionary History*

The analysis of Stalinism as a "deformed capitalist state" made by Walter Daum is very persuasive. The idea that it was a particular form of state capitalism because of its origins in a defeated workers revolution has much to commend it. . . . Read this book by all means. . . . But heed our "health warning." His aim . . . is not to give Trotskyism a decent burial: on the contrary, he wants to revive the corpse and give it a facelift.

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world war and fascism. All this is not a bourgeois plot, although capitalists do conspire. It derives from capital's laws of motion. (p. 73.)

According to Cliff, the state's intervention into the economy to demand specific use value means that value has been replaced as the aim of capitalist production. Workers' Power's "spontaneous negation" of value is the same idea, based on the failure to see how the law of value actually operates. Also in this epoch, the falling rate of profit tendency drives capitalism into grave crises like the depression of the 1930's. When the system founders, the quest for squeezing more surplus value out of the workers intensifies. Thinking that the law of value disappears under capitalism as it degenerates turns reality upon its head. It is no wonder that WP has a problem understanding that this is the epoch of capitalist decay.

In Workers Power's major article on the epoch (*Permanent Revolution* No. 8, 1989), Keith Hassell rejects Trotsky's analysis of the epoch of capitalist decay and trades it in for a superficial notion of an economy forever capable of going up and down:

Trotsky's problem was a tendency to identify or confuse the analysis of a distinct period with the imperialist epoch as a whole. To escape from the view of the epoch as one of stagnation and decline it was necessary to theorize not only the nature of business cycles and the epoch but of longer term periods In concrete terms, in the interwar years it would have involved a recognition that to a large extent the analysis of ascending and declining periods of imperialist development revolved around the dynamics of the relationship between the major imperialist nations.

That is, the long-term tendencies of the system cannot be scientifically analyzed; all depends on competitive relations among the great powers. Once again for WP, it is the middle-class idea that competition is more decisive for capitalism than its inner laws of exploitation. Understanding the importance of those laws led Lenin and Trotsky to see

this epoch as that of capitalist decay and, hence, of the transition to socialism. Rejecting the dominance of systemic decay means rejecting the objective basis for the development of proletarian revolutionary consciousness. Preobrazhensky took such a turn when he blocked with Stalin. Workers Power does not follow this logic to its conclusion, but the direction is there all the same.

As well, Hassell denies the domination of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall based on the rising organic composition of capital, which Marx called "in every respect the most important law of political economy." (The operation of this law is explained in depth in our book.) For WP, it too can go either way:

Marx . . . noted that the main way capital raises the rate of profit is by raising the technical and organic composition of capital. This raises the productivity of labor and with it increases the rate of exploitation. So we might just as well say that a higher organic composition of capital equals a higher rate of profit. Instead it is important to recognize that changes in the organic composition of capital give rise to opposite and contradictory movements in profit rates. (Emphasis added.)

Here Workers Power goes further than Preobrazhensky, who rejected merely the averaging tendency of the rate of profit, not its decline. For WP, the long-run trend of the profit rate, like much else, is uncertain, balanced in equilibrium. So, Hassell adds, "the question of whether profit rates rise or fall due to the rise in the organic composition of capital . . . has to be studied concretely." Indeed it does; our book cites studies that illustrate the falling tendency, and Workers Power ignores them.

But the real issue is methodological. All the laws of capitalism have countertendencies, but their contradiction cannot remain in balance for more than a historical moment: one side or the other has to dominate. In all such cases, Marx was determined to understand which wins out. Revolutionary conclusions depend on such understanding.

Workers Power's undialectical uncertainty is not at root a philosophical problem. WP's wavering reflects its centrism, its indecision in the face of the push and pull of rival class forces. This equivocation covers for a positive but unadmitted orientation toward Stalinist reformism. And as we shall see, it also covers for a positive orientation towards traditional reformism. Centrism inevitably means revolutionary rhetoric combined with reformism in practice.

REFORMISM AND STALINISM

As we have often pointed out, any present-day workers' state theory represents not just a capitulation to Stalinism but also extreme cynicism towards the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat everywhere. The post-war discovery by Trotsky's epigones that Stalinism was not decisively counterrevolutionary in essence, that it could create "deformed workers' states," was a reflection of their capitulation to reformism and the growing labor aristocracy in the West. Forces that Trotsky had considered counterrevolutionary, both the Stalinists and reformists of the familiar home-grown variety, were now both thought to be progressive.

We have dissected Workers Power's particular forms of theoretical and political adaptation to home-grown reformism in an earlier article, emphasizing its permanent semi-entryist position inside the British Labour Party. ("Workers Power: A Powerless Answer to Reformism," *PR* 23). The allegiance to domestic reformism is the underlying reason why WP hesi-

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Vol. 5, No. 4, Spring 1995

Trotskyism and Left Communism in Italy

The predominance of the Italian Communist Party and its promotion of the ideas of Gramsci have resulted in much of the history of the revolutionary left in Italy being obscured or totally hidden. This issue corrects the imbalance by presenting for the first time in English a series of essays describing the rise and development of the Italian Trotskyist and Left Communist movements from the late 1920's to the aftermath of the Second World War.

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tates to award the Stalinist states their death certificates. The essence of WP's far-left politics has been its inherently contradictory attempt to attach itself to the reformists while at the same time to cling earnestly to the banner of revolutionary Trotskyism. For example, WP wrote:

A revolutionary understanding of reformism . . . must encompass both the recognition of its counterrevolutionary, bourgeois character and its origins as a working class gain, made in the class struggle. (*Permanent Revolution* No. 1, 1983.)

That is, Workers Power counts as proletarian gains not just the building of mass working-class parties but also the reformist ideology that their petty-bourgeois leaders saddled them with. Note that this formula is even more positive about reformism per se than WP is toward Stalinism. Note also that despite the claim that this is the revolutionary view, WP can find no basis in Lenin, Trotsky or Luxemburg — all of whom knew that reformism was an invasive petty-bourgeois doctrine designed to undermine Marxism and the idea of the self-liberation of the proletariat. Imagine Lenin or Trotsky referring to Bernsteinism as a working-class gain!

MOVEMENTS VS. LEADERSHIPS

A recent LRCI document, a synopsis of their new perspectives after the LRCI Third Congress, reinforces the link between their theories of Stalinism and reformism:

The collapse and degeneration of world Stalinism, the further embourgeoisement of Social Democracy, the capitulation of yesterday's anti-imperialist heroes — all sharpen the crisis of proletarian leadership. To the extent that this destroys or weakens the mass labor and popular movements, built up over decades or centuries, it is clearly a victory for the bourgeoisie.

But these movements were not only organizations of the workers, they were also instruments of the bourgeoisie for disciplining and subordinating the working class and its allies. Their weakening and discrediting opens the road to the creation of a new revolutionary labor movement: renewed fighting unions and workplace organizations, new popular organizations and above all, new revolutionary parties and a new revolutionary international. (*TI* 15.)

This is a hazy attempt to summarize the contradictory nature of today's conjuncture and in particular the reformist organizations. But once again contradiction reaches a balanced equilibrium rather than a resolution on a new level.

For the LRCI, social democracy and other forms of reformism — Stalinism and nationalist anti-imperialism — have dual characteristics. First, LRCI equates these alien class ideologies not with the rotten leaderships but with the workers' movements. Thus, on the one hand, the collapse of these ideologies and leaderships weakens the movements; on the other, these movements themselves, not the alien leaderships, are instruments of the bourgeoisie.

The difference between middle-class reformist leadership and its ideologies (both counterrevolutionary, according to Lenin and Trotsky!), and the movements of the working class and oppressed, is completely dissolved. In reality, it is not the workers' movements that must take the responsibility for being instruments of the bourgeoisie but the counterrevolutionary leaderships. For example, there were two distinct events in the recent collapse of Stalinism, not just conceptually but in reality: the mass movements that destroyed the Stalinist regimes, and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois usurpations of their victories. LRCI's formula merges the two

together, obscuring the role of the reformist and Stalinist leaders in tying the workers to sections of the bourgeoisie during the mass upheavals.

Likewise, the difference between movement and organization is blurred over — that's the meaning of citing the weakening of mass labor and popular movements to refer to unions, labor parties and unspecified, apparently cross-class, "popular" movements. For one thing, the decrepit unions are not the same as the working-class movement. Then, LRCI lumps together trade unions and reformist parties — that is, the historic united front defensive organizations of the working class and the thoroughly counterrevolutionary parties resting on the workers.

While communists defend all independent organizations of the working class when they are actually under bourgeois attack, we make a distinction between unions and parties. Social democratic and Communist parties were once workers' gains, but they became totally counterrevolutionary. The reformist parties remain organizationally independent of the bourgeoisie — but this serves as a trap since they are the rulers' political tools. Support for them is a tactical question, designed to expose both the party and its capitulatory leaders. Therefore, while Leninists always build the unions, we fight for the revolutionary party to crush the reformist party. (For further elaboration, see COFI's Political Resolution in *PR* 48.)

ACCEPTING GERMAN UNIFICATION

Another link between Workers Power's tailing of reformism and its theory of Stalinism is the example of East Germany, cited in Part 1. The German case was incontrovertible: East Germany was peacefully swallowed by overtly capitalist West Germany. So Workers Power had to admit the fact, despite its devastating consequences for their theory: how could a workers state peacefully be transformed into a capitalist state? As Trotsky pointed out, if no counterrevolution is necessary, then no revolution was necessary.

Furthermore, in an absolutely incredible act for a tendency which claims to defend "workers' states," LRCI supported German unification, i.e., the obliteration of the East German "workers' state" and its subordination by capitalist West Germany. The breakdown of the Berlin Wall in 1989 led WP to adopt the nationalist formula of defending the "integrity of the German nation." (*Workers Power*, November 1989.) Claiming that "the division of Germany was a reactionary denial of the right of self-determination" (*TI* No. 4), LRCI gave primacy to the national question over the class question — and in an imperialist nation to boot. Some Leninists!

How is such an adaptation possible? Because nationalism is not just a far-right ideology: it is also a hallmark of reformism. Workers Power's national integrity formula reinforces the chauvinism fostered by the reformist labor bureaucracy. So it is no coincidence that LRCI's acceptance of the peaceful restoration of capitalism — the reformism in reverse that so flouts the fundamental teachings of Marxism and above all Trotskyism — occurred in a country where imperialism has produced powerful reformist misleaderships of the working class. As we wrote of Workers Power in *PR* 23:

All the theorizing about Stalinism as counterrevolutionary but nevertheless progressive is, in reality, just a reflection of their parallel understanding of the counterrevolutionary leaders the workers face at home.

Since its East German debacle, LRCI has refused to ac-

cept that any other ex-Stalinist state has become capitalist, despite the evident exploitation (even super-exploitation!), lack of planning, etc. To admit that one country after another has undergone a peaceful social counterrevolution would be too openly and embarrassingly reformist for a tendency that has far-left pretensions.

In organizational terms, the notion of peaceful counter-revolution/revolution undermines Workers Power's history of denying its similarities with the Militant Tendency and the other ex-Trotskyists who have permanently entered the Labour Party. WP has correctly attacked Militant for blurring the difference between reformism and revolution and implying that a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism is possible. WP believes it possible to perpetually remain inside of the Labour Party and maintain a line of separation between reform and revolution. Their German position was taken out of dire need at an acute moment to preserve the semblance of their theory; but to generalize it would be an open admission that Militant was right all along.

TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

Philosophers have attempted to understand the world in many ways, wrote Marx; the point, however, is to change it. The aim of *The Life and Death of Stalinism* was to arm revolutionaries for the intensifying class struggle. So our book concluded with an outline of the Trotskyist Transitional Program as it applied to the Stalinist states.

In the discussion of program that ends their review, Workers' Power goes off the deep end. They claim it made no sense for us to pose the Transitional Program under Stalinism (as we did in Chapter 8 of our book.) The Transitional Program calls for expropriation of key industries, for example. "What are we to understand by this?", they ask. "The key industries are already state property — how can the state expropriate them?"

There is nothing very startling in this demand, however, considering the post-Stalinist counterrevolution's attempts to super-exploit the workers — a process well under way during the latter days of Stalinism itself. Our book explains that the aim of the expropriation slogan is to stop the wave of privatizations that the rulers, ex-Stalinist and otherwise, were pushing for; to prevent the establishment of profitability criteria for keeping industries alive; and to take back those that have already been swiped by state capitalists turned into traditional bourgeois.

Amusingly enough, in their own program for the "moribund degenerate workers' states," published in *TI 15*, LRCI demands, "Halt all denationalization of the large scale means of production and re-nationalize all sectors already sold off." This slogan is similar to expropriation but less sharp, since ours clearly means no compensation to the capitalists. In fact, Trotsky in the Transitional Program specifically calls for expropriation in order to distinguish it from the reformists' "muddleheaded reformist slogan of nationalization." As always, WP's line on the Stalinist states reflects its capitulation to reformism back home.

A decisive example in the East: in 1988, the still-Stalinist government of Poland, in deference to the demands of Western creditors, attempted to close (and then sell off) the outdated but still productive Gdansk shipyard, the birthplace of the workers' near-revolution in 1980. (The financiers' pressure had nothing to do with the law of value, presumably.) Workers went on strike to protest, raising the transitional demand, "Open the Books!" As we noted, the Transi-

tional Program expresses the logic of the workers' struggle under capitalism of every form, and this particular demand expressed the immediate need for workers' control as a transition to workers' revolution. Further we noted:

That Polish workers have to strike to protest the government's privatization of the Gdansk shipyards confirms the Marxist understanding that nationalized property is inherently a proletarian form, not an inherent interest of the bureaucracy. (*Life and Death of Stalinism*, p. 359.)

Nevertheless, Workers Power, in the only section of its review that takes up the current situation, chooses to handle this issue with an outright lie:

He [Daum] is perfectly well aware that, if it is necessary to defend a single statified industry, or a single planning agency, then it is necessary to defend them all. And when an entire economy has been statified it is necessary to defend the whole economy, and that means defending the state controlling that economy against imperialist aggression. ... The capitalist counterrevolutionaries recognize the importance of the destruction of these vestiges of the October Revolution, even if Daum, armed with his theory, does not.

WP accuses us of not defending statified property against privatization, a falsification of all we have written in the book and our press. We defend all proletarian gains in all countries. We defend nationalized property in the ex-Stalinist states, Sweden, Great Britain, the U.S. and everywhere else. We defend the independence of oppressed nations against imperialist aggression, as with Cuba.

What makes WP froth is that we do not defend the Stalinist and post-Stalinist states. And in this we are absolutely consistent, because these states do not defend state property especially when it embodies the rights, conditions and wages of the workers (as WP's own description of China illustrates). The one principle these states have defended consistently is that property has to be kept *from* the workers.

It is not a question, by the way, of defending the post-Stalinist states against imperialist aggression, as WP puts it. The Western imperialists and the Stalinists-turned-post-Stalinists are on the same side. When it comes to fighting the workers, they have always been partners, but with the socialist mask removed there is far less pretense.

TAILING REFORMISM

For all their vitriol against us for supposedly not defending nationalized property, and their insistence that you have to defend the state to defend fully nationalized property, it is they and not we who failed the decisive test. When they supported the West German takeover of East Germany, they failed to defend the "workers' state" and therefore, by their logic, failed to defend nationalized property! Typical centrism: pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric combined with obsequious reformist capitulation in practice.

Workers Power's final, lying, swipe is a desperate effort to salvage a moribund theory they know is unable to cope with the nature of Stalinism and the critical events since its collapse. Their attempt to refute our analysis, which has been unmatched in its insight into this decadent system, is a profound demonstration of our book's contention: to not understand Stalinism is to not understand capitalism at all. Ironically LRCI, one of the most anti-Stalinist of the "workers' state" tendencies, still supports the "workers' states" when even the pro-Stalinists have abandoned them — because of its most fundamental political drive, tailing reformism. ●

The Second Mexican Revolution

by Bob Wolfe

Mexico is plunging headlong into a major depression. Whole sections of the working class and peasantry face ruin and immiseration, as the corrupt ruling class attempts to unload on the backs of the exploited masses the costs of the world-shaking financial crisis that broke out early this year when the government devalued the peso.

As workers are booted out of industry and peasants driven from their lands, a political crisis also looms. Until now, throughout the years of hardship since the explosion of the debt crisis in 1982, Mexican capitalism was able to create the illusion of progress and development with the hope for a better future for the masses. Now that the game of smoke and mirrors has been revealed, the ruling class faces a massive loss in confidence: the workers and peasants no longer believe they have a future under capitalism.

The crisis in Mexico is but the first of a series of shock waves that threaten to undermine the foundations of international capitalism. Mexico's debt crisis reflects the fragility of the capitalist world market bloated by the accumulation of fictitious capital. And unable to qualitatively develop the productive forces of society, capitalism more and more engages in a savage cannibalization of the existing forces of production to meet the competing claims for a share of the surplus value produced by the working class. Ruthless and intensified exploitation of the proletariat is the order of the day.

DEBT AND DISASTER

World capitalism's declining rate of profit since the 1970's led it to seek out high-profit but high-risk investments in the so-called developing nations like Mexico. Under the banner of progress and development, such countries were driven by their ruling capitalist classes to take on massive debts, with the false promises of future payoffs. In reality, the debts of Mexico and elsewhere were means for imperialist powers to suck out capital from weaker nations. While the local rulers stashed away their share of the plunder abroad, the workers were left to foot the bill.

Mexico's crisis is no sudden development. Since 1982, it has undergone at least 8 or more "bailouts." Indeed, prior to the current devaluation, Mexico's workers still hadn't come close to regaining the buying power they had before 1982.

The idea that President Clinton and the U.S. ruling class are running to rescue Mexico is a cruel joke. For years, Wall Street and other imperialist investors enjoyed superprofits based on the exploitation of low-wage Mexican workers. Huge debt service payments not only are highly profitable for the creditors, but have served as a rationale for slashing the social wage and reducing the income and living standards of Mexican workers. With the development of the maquiladora factories along the U.S. border and former president Carlos Salinas's privatization and free market "reforms," Mexico became an investors' paradise and a workers' nightmare.

Low-wage export industries were supposed to fuel the drive to pay off the huge debt. The problem was that to develop the export economy meant attracting foreign investment (oil revenues were insufficient as a result of the worldwide decline in oil prices). Mexico had to increase its debt, gambling that this would lead to enough economic growth to pay it off.

By the late 1980's, with the level of export-oriented growth proving still insufficient to solve the debt crisis, the Salinas regime began putting up whole sections of the econ-



Mexico City: Mass demonstration supports Zapatista rebels.

omy for sale in order to increase the flow of investment. While attention was paid to the import of foreign capital, little was said of the drain of capital leaving Mexico. Foreign funds were used to buy imports: capital and luxury goods from the U.S., Japan, Germany and other imperialist nations.

Selling out the last shreds of Mexico's independence, Salinas tied Mexico's future closely to the U.S. economy. With the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Mexico seemed to be on the way to becoming a U.S. colony. As we warned in 1992 in opposing NAFTA, "its chief purpose is to permanently undo Mexico's traditional nationalist protectionism." (PR 42.) NAFTA aimed to extend the

cheap-labor maquiladora conditions to all of Mexican industry, undermining the wages and living standards of workers in Mexico (and in the U.S. and Canada as well).

Under NAFTA, the Mexican trade deficit soared to \$30 billion in 1994 (most of it to the U.S., the basis for Clinton's claim that NAFTA would lead to U.S. job growth at Mexico's expense) — hardly a way to pay off the huge debt. Still, even without taking into account the cost of imports, the payment of the debt service proved to be even greater than the income from Mexico's exports.

Salinas' economic "miracle" was a fraud based on an overvalued peso. Mexico attracted foreign investment by promising exorbitant rates of return that could not be sustained. Like a pyramid scheme, Salinas & Co. could only pay off investors by continuing to attract new cash. The problem was that this required state intervention to prop up the peso in order to insure investors they would get the full value on their dollars. In effect, the government was subsidizing foreign investors, giving out inflated profits by squeezing the workers and peasants. Even this proved insufficient. Eventually, the Mexican government ran out of cash reserves and was forced to devalue.

Prior to the devaluation carried out in late 1994 by Salinas' successor, Ernesto Zedillo, many of the big investors had already abandoned ship. Both domestic and foreign capital had been taking the profits and running for a number of years. In fact, most of the investment did not go into factories and long-term capital investment but rather to speculation in high yielding stocks and bonds. Investors made huge profits that were not reinvested but sent abroad.

While politically-connected capitalists and government officials made out like bandits, most Mexicans, including sections of the capitalist class, got no benefits at all. Mexico is left with even more debt and very little to show for it. On top of all this, the imperialists now want guarantees that they will continue to enjoy superprofits — while they demand sacrifices by the masses if Mexico is to continue to borrow more at usurious rates.

CAPITALIST 'SOCIALISM'

To critics who pointed out that opening up Mexico would lead to mass suffering, the imperialists and their agents answered that this was the price that has to be paid for progress. Yet no sooner had the crisis revealed by the devaluation threatened foreign investors, than the "free traders" screamed for government intervention.

As journalist William Greider put it (*Rolling Stone*, March 9):

In its broad outline the Mexican bailout resembles another disastrous financial scandal from recent history — the savings-and-loan debacle of the 1980's. ... The circumstances are quite different, of course, but both episodes contain the same glaring contradiction: Finance capital wants to be free from government regulations or social obligations so it can roam the globe in search of the most profitable investments. Then, when those investments go sour in a big way, the players insist that government rescue them from the consequences of their own folly. Like the S&L operators before them, the global investors reaped the profits on the upside, while the general taxpayers are supposed to cover their tab on the downside. ...

This system calls itself free market capitalism, but maybe the right name for it is free-ride capitalism.

For the working classes, the chief lesson to be drawn is

that no capitalist leader is at all interested in bailing out the impoverished masses. One Mexican government after another will continue to squeeze out more surplus value from the workers to pay the ever-growing debt — unless the working class makes its proletarian socialist revolution that, among other things, dares to repudiate the imperialist debt.

NAFTA AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

NAFTA was proclaimed to symbolize the victory of free trade and privatization over protectionism and statism. It represented the logic of George Bush's call for a New World Order in the aftermath of the collapse of Stalinism in the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Yet the first crisis under NAFTA reveals imperialism's hypocrisy. The bailout of financiers by the imperialists is an attempt to protect investors through state intervention while demanding privatization and free markets in developing areas.

"Developing" nations are lectured by imperialist politicians and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the need to cut the social wage and stop subsidizing the meager living standards of the masses, but subsidizing capitalists is another matter. Of course, since U.S. workers would not accept granting direct subsidies to Wall Street, it was necessary to pose the handout as an effort to rescue Mexico.

Bush's call reflected the tremendous openings for private capital to penetrate "third-world" nations at the end of the Cold War. From 1989 to 1994, while official aid to developing countries rose from \$42.6 billion to \$54.5 billion, private capital investments more than quadrupled — from \$41.9 billion to \$172 billion. In the last 3 years Mexico alone attracted \$45 billion in mutual funds investments!

As in Mexico, much of this investment takes the form of short-term assets like mutual funds and stocks, not long-term plant and equipment investments. In Mexico, 80% of foreign investment went into stocks and short term Treasury bonds (tesobonos). Privatization and free trade have become catchwords for plunder and looting of whole nations.

Beyond the specific investors rescued by Clinton's plan, the bailout aimed to allay the fear that if Mexico defaulted it would bring down markets and the international banking system in a "meltdown." Wall Street this winter was full of talk about "panics," and an economic domino effect was bolstered by the pounding of Latin American and Asian financial markets.

Above all, Mexico was touted as a model for free trade and privatization as opposed to protectionism and state-led economic development. Its collapse would undermine the marketizing efforts in the former Stalinist states and "third-world" nations. Free traders feared that without U.S. intervention, Mexico's fall would lead to a withdrawal of foreign funds from other poor countries as well as to capital flight from heavily indebted imperialist nations like Sweden, Italy and Canada.

Marxists have long understood that in capitalism's epoch of decay, state intervention becomes necessary to save private property. The contradiction between this drive and current ruling-class ideology is blatant. As one capitalist put it, "It's ironic that to encourage capitalism in emerging economies you must socialize the risk for U.S. investors." (*New York Times*, Feb. 12.)

Despite imperialism's need to prevent a collapse that would undermine world financial markets, the U.S. Congress was divided and paralyzed over Clinton's bailout plans. Dominant sections of the U.S. ruling class favored it, and a split

among the Republicans developed, with party leaders Dole and Gingrich supporting Clinton. But many new Congressmen representing the increasingly protectionist petty bourgeoisie opposed the bailout.

Polls showed that popular sentiment was overwhelmingly against Clinton. Right-wing populists like Rush Limbaugh and Pat Buchanan attacked the bailout as a handout to corrupt Mexican politicians and Wall Street. As it became clear that a divided Congress would not act, Clinton was forced to bypass it. His new plan actually bailed out Congress as well — even supporters of the bailout were anxious to avoid a vote on something so unpopular yet so necessary for capitalism.

The circus atmosphere surrounding the bailout debate hid the fact that most Mexicans, especially workers and peasants, had no wish to be “saved” by U.S. imperialism. After years of being bled dry and forced into economic ruin under U.S. tutelage, Mexican workers saw the bailout as another sellout by their rulers to the imperialists. In particular, the stipulation that Mexican oil revenues would be held hostage to pay off the debt showed how far the capitalists had gone in selling out Mexican independence. The nationalization of foreign-owned oil companies in the late 1930's had symbolized a high point in the anti-imperialist struggle of the Mexican workers.

MEXICO IN TURMOIL

As bad as the known aspects of the agreement were, many wondered what secret deals had been cut behind their backs. And Mexican workers have good reason to worry. They are already being told they will have to tighten their belts in order to weather the depression induced by the U.S.-IMF bailout plan.

As the full crisis hits, strikes and outbreaks threaten to topple the shaky Zedillo regime. Even the once safe maquiladora industries have been hit by strikes as workers struggle to survive the massive attacks on their living standards. The dangerous situation for Mexico's rulers is accentuated by their inability to suppress the peasant uprising in Chiapas that began in January 1994. Despite the Zapatista leadership's disdain for a proletarian revolutionary strategy, the Chiapas revolt remains a rallying cry for angry workers and peasants.

The ruling class is scrambling to avoid massive social unrest. In February there was a huge series of protests against the deal in Mexico City. A report circulated on the Internet described the scene at the Zocalo, Mexico City's immense main plaza (the EZLN is the Zapatista army):

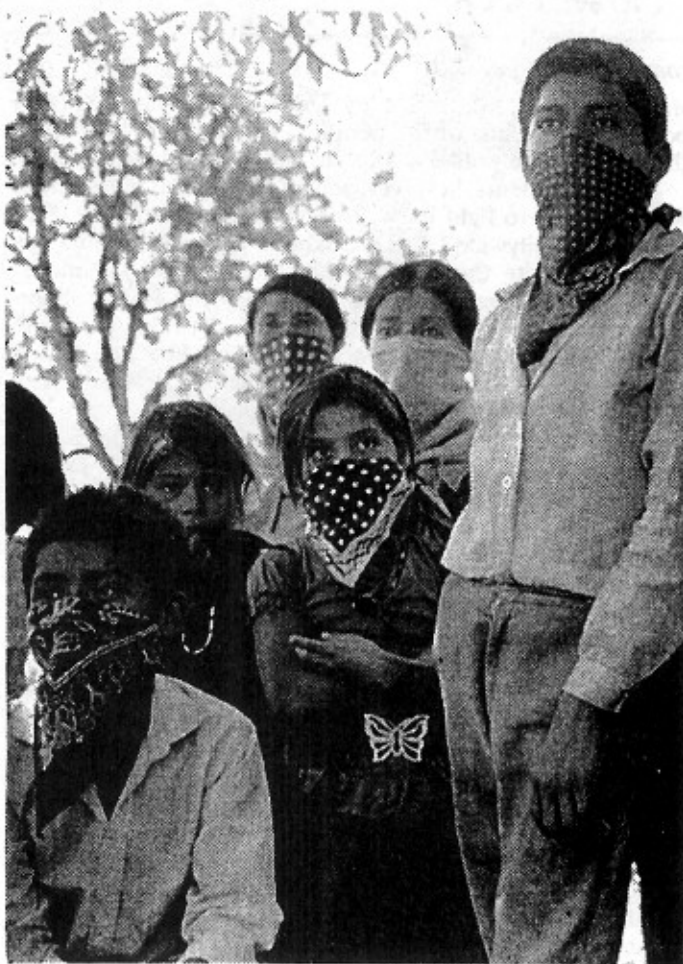
The young men appeared fearless as they painted their slogans ... and the assorted pro-EZLN messages. They painted in broad daylight, in front of on-lookers and guards. Some wore ski-masks, but others did not, even as they were being videotaped and photographed. They painted on the building of the pro-government newspaper Excelsior, on the sidewalks and streets, and even entered McDonalds on Calle Madero to paint inside on windows and on their floors.

When I asked them if they were afraid that the police might come, they all answered that they no longer had any fear. As one masked youth who went straight up to the national palace doors and painted EZLN said, “In Mexico we were born with fear, but there is nothing to fear anymore. Either we die fighting or we die of hunger.” Another youth took his resistance even farther as he unzipped his pants and pissed on the symbolic seat of the

national government.

Several unions had a strong presence, including the electrical, telephone, and petroleum workers. These workers expressed their disgust for Fidel Velazquez, the leader of the pro-government union federation CTM, who recently commented that workers should give a day's salary to help pay the debt and that those who support the Zapatistas are acting illegally and should be punished.

More recently, the government ordered the cancellation of the traditional May Day demonstrations. This did not stop over 70,000 workers from filling the Zocalo. According to the *Washington Post*, workers spray-painted the National Palace with slogans, including “The fatherland is for sale.”



Chiapas: Rebel women and children attend discussion on government proposals.

While the Chiapas revolt plagues the ruling class, the solution to Mexico's crisis can only be found in a working-class-led socialist revolution. More than ever, Mexico is tied hand and foot to the world market. Imperialism can only be defeated by a revolution that overthrows capitalist power, reorganizes society and fights for international revolution.

This is the only possible strategy for revolutionary workers in Mexico. The program of expropriating industry and the banks, giving land to the peasants and repudiating the debt would rally millions of workers and peasants against the handful of parasitic rulers tied to imperialism. To accomplish this, revolutionary workers in Mexico need to build their authentic communist party, a section of a re-

created Fourth International, to lead the fight.

For years, the working class has been bombarded with defeatist propaganda about its weakness. Capitalism, not the working class, we are told, has become internationalist, as capital moves rapidly across borders to free itself of the restraints of class struggle.

But this means that capitalism is even more vulnerable. A crisis in one region quickly spreads throughout the whole imperialist system, pointing to its underlying fragility and

weakness. So far, the imperialist rulers have been fortunate to have to deal with only a financial crisis in Mexico that has yet to mature into a full-blown social and political one.

Compared to the Revolution of 1910, the second Mexican Revolution would be vastly more influential. A revolutionary Mexico ruled by the working class would be a mighty beacon to the oppressed nations of Latin America, Africa, and Asia where maturing, revolutionary proletarian forces look for leadership in the struggle against imperialism. ●

New York

continued from page 40

state Assembly, controlled by Democratic politicians who posture as "friends of the people." Aiming to save CUNY, they begged the politicians to cut other services instead.

Many students, however, soon realized that mass action was necessary to fight back. Protests erupted on many campuses, and a citywide CUNY Coalition Against the Cuts was formed. Despite the working-class character of the movement, with Blacks and Latinos in the majority, the Coalition leadership was more middle-class, disproportionately made up of graduate students. Few students saw how committed the ruling class was to making severe cutbacks — and how far-reaching a struggle would be necessary.

Supporters of the LRP were active in the struggle. We fought hard against the orientation to the capitalist Democrats, argued that strike action by the entire working class was needed to stop the attacks and urged that CUNY students begin such a struggle. But we could not overcome illusions in the Democratic Party held by many activists — fooled by the smothering embrace of union bureaucrats who "supported" the struggle only to derail it. The reformist line was reinforced by the outright hostility to revolutionary ideas of middle-class leftists, notably the International Socialist (ISO) hacks and the anarchist Love and Rage group, who refused to speak the truth about capitalism and how to fight it.

REFORMISTS DRIVE TO DEAD END

The first mass action was taken by the hospital workers' union: 30,000 workers rallied at the Empire State Building on March 1. But instead of encouraging the workers to spread a call for strike action against the cuts, 1199 union president Dennis Rivera told all to go home and send postcards to "Dear Governor Pataki" begging for his support. Himself an official of the New York State Democratic Party, Rivera's line was, "If the Assembly doesn't fight for us, we're dead."

Next, on March 16 several thousand CUNY students marched to the World Trade Center in a rally sponsored by the Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus of Democratic hacks. The politicians' answer was to organize another protest in Albany against Pataki, and then urge people to register to vote for Democrats.

The Coalition's rally took place on March 23 at City Hall. Over 10,000 students and staff members came looking for action, and thousands more high school students would have shown up if the cops and school officials had not kept them off the subways. One indication of the movement's fighting potential was that we sold over 100 copies of *Proletarian Revolution*. But the leadership offered no way forward. The main slogans were "Student Strike Against the

Cuts!" and "Shut the City Down!" In reality, the only "strike" intended was to pull students off the campuses for the rally, and the only thing "shut down" would have been traffic.

The leaders hoped to march to Wall Street, the symbolic center of finance capitalism and the real power behind Pataki. But they had not prepared the crowd for a march ahead of time, intending instead to prove their militancy by challenging the police. When the cops showed up in strength with riot gear and tightly patrolled barricades, the leadership's disarray was blatant. Fights broke out on the podium over who could speak and how to march. Cops brutally attacked hundreds of protesters, arresting dozens.

The confusion was political, not just organizational. It stemmed from the leaders' strategy of moving from one protest to another. Talk of strikes and shutting the city down was hollow rhetoric, not meant to lead to workers' action against the anti-working class budget cuts. So the opportunity was squandered of pointing a *political* finger at Wall Street, even if it was not possible to march there. The arrests, on top of the aimlessness of the rally, led to a loss of vital momentum.

Moreover, rallies alone, however much they energize participants and win support from onlookers, are no answer — unless they are a launching pad for further action. As a bulletin distributed by the LRP explained:

Those who chant "The Students United Will Never be Defeated" are right to feel energized by the big demonstrations but are wrong to think that a struggle by students alone can win. . . . Organized as students, they do not have their hands on the production of profits, which makes capitalism run. The working class . . . can shut down the economy's profit-making and bring the rulers to their knees.

Under the circumstances, we argued for a specific tactic: since working-class students conscious of their hopes for the future could inspire the rest of the working class into struggle, we called for a *CUNY Strike to Spark the Working Class* to fight against all the cuts. Since in the past student "strikes" have too often meant little more than takeovers of campus buildings by small groups, we spelled our slogan out:

A student strike must mean working-class action. The campuses should be used as organizing bases to appeal to greater numbers of working-class people. And the strike should be against all the budget cuts, to show that we are fighting for the interests of all the working class and oppressed.

Strike committees should be formed and mass open meetings called where all can have their say and where democratic decisions for action can be taken. We need to start with informational picket lines as soon as possible to spread the call for the mass student strike with real picket lines that shut down key parts of the campuses.

A genuine strike does not mean elitist "guerrilla tactics" but mass action by the working-class students. While the

tactic of occupying buildings can be useful in a mass strike, small-group actions must not be allowed to confine the struggle to a handful of activists and derail the opportunity for a mass struggle.

We fought for our program through leaflets, phone calls and agitational interventions at rallies. (Our leaflets are available to interested readers on request.) We won students from several campuses to work with us, young workers who saw the impact our strategy could have on their families and friends. Many agreed with our approach for a general strike:

Another danger is sectoralism: the idea that CUNY can be defended separate from a struggle against all the attacks against the working class and oppressed. This is a dead-end; we have no interest in passing the CUNY cutbacks on to other sectors of the working class, which would only prepare the way for even worse attacks tomorrow. Anyway, it is us, our families and neighbors that depend on all the gains that are under attacks like welfare and health care.

In contrast to our concrete proposals, the leadership's program of repeated aimless protests amounted to a more militant version of Rivera's pleading with the politicians.

Thus, as the March 23 rally fell apart, several hundred students and supporters marched to nearby Borough of Manhattan Community College to assess the situation. But with the microphone controlled by the leadership clique, little discussion was allowed. An ISO representative told the crowd that the thing to do was disperse. A march to police headquarters to support the arrested students took place, but no future mass actions were proposed. The chance to build on the fighting spirit of tens of thousands was wasted.

RIVERA MOVES IN

At the next Coalition meeting the leadership was handed a way out. A representative from 1199 announced that the hospital union was planning a march to Wall Street on April 4, the anniversary of Martin Luther King's murder, along with religious figures led by the demagogic Democratic politician, Rev. Al Sharpton. The unions would mobilize between 20,000 and 30,000 workers, she said, and the CUNY students were invited to join as equal partners.

LRPers spoke in favor of a student-worker action, pointing out that it was a great chance to show a key section of the working class the way forward. The rally could kick off a CUNY strike, and we could appeal to union members and other workers to fight for a general strike against the budget cuts. These reasons were the opposite of the pro-capitalist leaders'. We warned that Sharpton and Rivera could not be trusted; they wanted a joint march in order to moderate the students' militancy lest it infect the workers, whose explosive feelings have been kept under the surface so far.

The 1199 proposal passed, but our motion for a CUNY

strike to spark the working class was tabled, largely through the efforts of bureaucratic leaders and the ISO. By the time of the following Coalition meeting a week later, it was clear to hospital workers that 1199 was not seriously building the rally. The union's posters advertised a "Walk for Justice" apparently to honor Dr. King; protesting the budget cuts was reduced to small print. So an LRP comrade who is an 1199 hospital worker came to the meeting and effectively challenged Rivera's rep's glowing report of union preparations.

Our strike proposal was again put off, in order to kill it.



March 23 student rally in New York. LRP fought for CUNY strike to spur general strike against budget cuts.

Political discussion was minimal: the leaders instead pushed an undemocratic and time-consuming voting structure intended to limit the influence of "outside" (i.e., left) organizations and supposedly increase participation of Black and Latino students (in reality the opposite of what it did). Yet despite the red-baiting, our fight for strike action drew support from students from several campuses. And an LRPer, known as a revolutionary, was voted to be one of the Coalition's faculty speakers at the rally.

April 4 proved to be a further step away from the necessary mass action. The unions brought few workers plus a few hundred stewards and officials, and student participation was also way down. Although they had agreed on the limited protest strategy, tensions between the union bureaucrats and student leaders continually threatened to explode. At the start, Rivera insisted that the rally be orderly; after one angry student speech, he threatened to call off the march. Sharpton, who himself once wore a wire for the FBI, all but accused some students of being provocateurs who should be thrown out of the demonstration.

At Wall Street the tensions erupted. Several ministers and union hacks, apparently invited by Sharpton and Rivera but not on the agreed-upon list, were outraged when they didn't get to speak. Walter Daum of the LRP was pressed by the stage managers to shorten his speech but did get in arguments for a general strike and workers' revolution, and an attack on the union leaders' anti-Pataki *Weekly News* for building illusions in the Democrats.

Then, in a bizarre scene at the podium, one student

denounced the “fucking liberal” speeches and union marshals tried to grab the microphone from him. He and others successfully resisted and began chanting, “Pataki, you liar, We’ll set your ass on fire”; this was then repeated substituting Giuliani and then Clinton. That done, Rivera went up to the mike and declared the rally over.

DEATH OF A MOVEMENT

After the April 4 fizzle, the student movement collapsed. Coalition meetings fell from several hundred to a few dozen, and mass action was totally forgotten. A hunger strike at City College — a last-ditch effort in the absence of a movement — won some support but little participation. There were 47 more arrests, on the order of college president Yolanda Moses (who postures as a “friend” of the movement).

On April 25, a series of tiny rallies by students and other cutback victims fed into traffic-blocking sit-downs at Manhattan bridges and tunnels during rush hour — a desperate tactic proving the bankruptcy of the leaders. One protester told the *New York Times*, “I know what it’s like to have a hard day at work. . . . But we’re out to give people a headache like the headache we’ll have trying to figure out how to pay for school next year.” Being a pain to working people like a petty Pataki is the opposite of a working-class answer.

When the budget was finally announced in June, CUNY faced about half of Pataki’s cuts along with a \$750 tuition hike. City College, for example, will lose about seven of 36 academic departments. Other social services, especially those benefiting the poorest sections of the working class, did even worse. On top of this, while working-class families will see their costs go up and benefits down, businesses and the rich get an immediate tax break: “Unless you’re among the wealthiest of New Yorkers, you won’t see much of a reduction in what’s withheld from your paycheck until 1997.” (*Albany Times Union*, June 3.)

All this had the support of the majority of Democratic legislators. Even worse, some union leaders went a level beyond their previous betrayals. As the *Village Voice* wrote:

The heads of five city unions . . . signed a letter drafted by Mayor Giuliani asking the governor and legislative leaders to pass a budget giving the city \$950 million in relief, most of which would come in the form of state actions allowing the city to reduce Medicaid and welfare benefits. (May 30.)

The treacherous union heads included the Teachers’ Sandra Feldman and the DC 37’s Stanley Hill, both social democrats and the latter a long-time ally of Dennis Rivera.

LIMITS OF MILITANCY

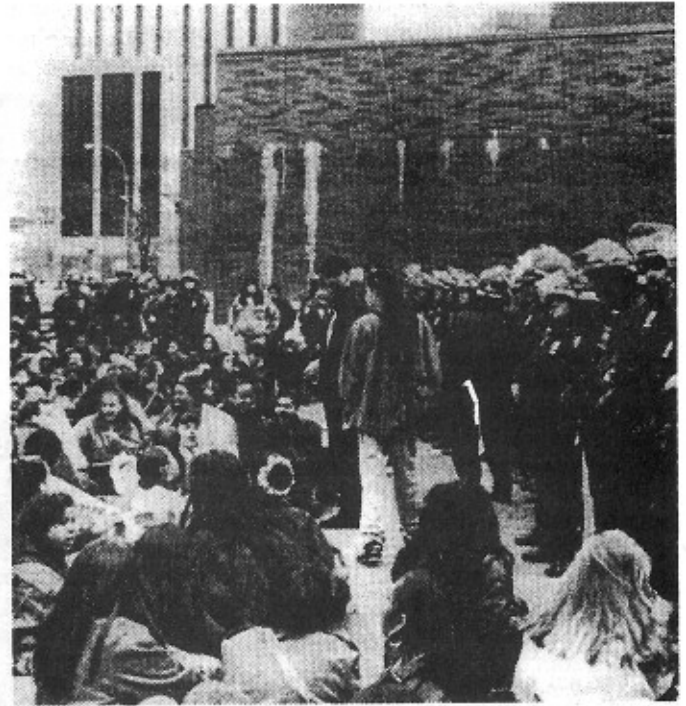
Despite the union bureaucrats’ discomfort on April 4, the student leaders had presented no real challenge to Rivera & Co. Their efforts to make the demonstration more radical-sounding were empty guerrilla tactics. The best of them were from the would-be Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialist Group (RSG). They wanted militant action and sometimes spoke for a general strike, but their political line got in the way.

RSG leaflets and speakers offered a labor party as the alternative to the Democrats. They are also supporters of Labor Party Advocates, although critical of its leadership and strategy. That means they have some notion of the current “left” labor bureaucrats forming such a party. As we show in our lead article, in the absence of mass action by the working class, a labor party today can only mean a class-collaborationist party led by such traitors.

The RSG also raised the slogan “Tax the Rich,” a favor-

ite of liberal populists and a few left labor folks. Unlike the transitional slogan “Expropriate the Banks and Industries,” “Tax the Rich” is reformist, not revolutionary.

The problem became clear when Pataki came to a televised town meeting in Staten Island in April, and hundreds of workers and students turned out to protest. An RSGer got the floor to demand the governor raise taxes on corporations.



CUNY students at police headquarters protesting cop provocations and arrests.

He replied, “We’ve already taxed them all the way to New Jersey” — reminding his audience that capitalists are free to move their businesses and the jobs that come with them. Unfortunately, Pataki won that round: without expropriating the capitalists or taking state power, there is no way for the working class to discipline capital. (See also our criticism of populist slogans, p. 8.)

A further problem was the RSG’s continual focus on agitation — addressing broad ideas at the average level of the mass of people in struggle. While this is necessary, a small revolutionary group must keep propaganda as its main task: training the most politically advanced workers in order to build the revolutionary party. But the RSGers saw themselves as organizers, trying to straddle the line between working-class strike advocacy and middle-class protest politics. When the student movement ebbed, they proved unable to shift course. They went along uncritically with the small-group tactics of hunger strikes and traffic-blocking that the Coalition degenerated to at the end.

The cutbacks have not yet been felt in full force. When they are, a revived student movement may yet be able to play a key role in the working-class struggle. We believe that the lessons of Spring 1995 will prove to layers of revolutionary-minded young fighters that building the communist party is a task that cannot be postponed. The crisis is intensifying, explosive struggles are inevitable — and working-class youth cannot afford to go into battle with reformist leaders. ●

CUNY: Liars Vanguard Strikes Again

Few pseudo-socialist organizations are as dedicated to outright lying about themselves and their left opponents as the Spartacist League. *Workers Vanguard's* April 21 article on the CUNY movement both invents a non-existent fighting SL leadership and slanders the LRP and the RSG. For example:

The New York Spartacus Youth Club has fought at teach-ins, meetings and rallies for students to unite with labor in a one-day citywide strike to shut down NYC . . .

In fact they fought for nothing. They raised such ideas in half-page leaflets and minimal interventions, and then dropped them. When the LRP fought for a student strike and demanded a vote on our strike motion at Coalition meetings, we were aided by RSG comrades and others but not by the Spartacists — who opposed the idea, claiming that a student strike could not spark the workers. (They conveniently moved outside to sell their paper during the vote.) They had a leaflet calling for a "class-struggle contingent" on April 4 and appealed to individuals to join, but they made no effort to win the Coalition from its reformist leaders by pushing an alternative strategy.

As for their slanders, we have space only for those dealing with the CUNY struggle. First, on linking with labor:

Various self-styled socialist groups have played up to this sentiment with radical-sounding rhetoric. While the reformist ISO hasn't even made a pretense of raising socialist politics, restricting itself to pushing its "connections" with Rivera and Sharpton, groups like the . . . RSG and . . . LRP have raised calls for strikes against the cuts, and even for a labor party independent of the Democrats.

Thanks, but we did not raise the "labor party"; we oppose this important tactic under present conditions (as we have often made clear: see PR 40, for example). We always call for a *revolutionary workers' party* and did so at the CUNY rallies, both in leaflets and from the podium. This political difference is one the Spartacists are so used to blurring that they pretend not to notice it.

And while the attack on the ISO for not raising socialist politics is accurate, the same could be said of the SL. Their "united front" contingent for April 4 had slogans for a citywide strike, free education, labor/black defense, a workers party, etc. but did not mention socialism or revolution.

The Spartacists most imaginative falsification was this:

Rivera was right up on the podium that day, but the "revolutionaries" who stood beside him did not so much as mention the role of the union bureaucrats. . . . Not one speaker dared to utter the name of Bill Clinton for fear of alienating their Democratic "allies." Because the RSG and LRP, like the ISO, have as a key part of their strategy a de facto bloc with the labor fakers, like Rivera — and his Democratic Party masters.

In reality, both LRP and RSG speakers said plenty against the Democrats. And the LRP distributed thousands of copies of a 4-page bulletin addressed to workers and students, at least one page of which was devoted to exposing the roles of Rivera and Sharpton as opportunist sellouts. (Copies are available to readers on request.)

As for the RSG, it was their speaker who Rivera blew up at when the rally began. We have major differences with the RSG (some of which are discussed in the adjoining article), but trying to block with Rivera was not their problem. One can argue that the RSG's call for a labor party breeds illusions in the bureaucracy; however, the SL's indeterminate "workers party," which is sometimes "based on the trade unions," some-

times revolutionary and sometimes both, has similar problems.

Although the SL takes credit for warning all and sundry about Rivera, at the Coalition meetings they did nothing of the sort, even during the argument between Rivera's hack and our hospital-worker comrade. (See the previous article.) Later, at the CCNY campus, SLers told us that our comrade's verbal battle with the 1199 rep over the bureaucrat's lies had been "anti-union." Identifying the union with its bureaucracy is hardly an exposure of the bureaucrats' role.

The Spartacists are not in a strong position to complain that others engage in "de facto blocs with labor fakers" or Democrats. Take the December 1994 rally in Chicago organized by the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC), an SL front group, in defense of political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal. It featured a parade of trade union officials, liberal politicians and clergyman. It's fine that these people turned up to support Jamal; it's too bad they didn't mobilize their followers. For communists, this is the main reason to work with them.

But the Spartacists did not challenge their reformist perspectives — at a meeting the SL organized and controlled. Not once did they demand that their liberal allies back words with action. They spoke under various names: the PDC, the Labor/Black Mobilization and the Spartacus Youth Club. One SLer spoke as a union militant, and indeed gave a militant speech — that is, it did not even hint at the Spartacists' allegedly communist program. Classic centrists, the Spartacists moderate their politics when an opportunity for opportunism arises.

'WORKERS PARTY' — WITH DEMOCRATS

Likewise, they wrote uncritically of Black Democratic politicians in Chicago who endorsed the SL/PDC-initiated anti-Klan rally in Springfield, Illinois, in January 1994. *Workers Vanguard* reported a Spartacist leader saying:

The role played in this mobilization by black Democrats, especially by Cook Commissioner Danny Davis but also the other black politicians, both in Chicago and in the state legislature, was really unusual. . . . These Democrats who want to struggle have a very big contradiction: black people need a party that will fight for their interests. It is currently abundantly clear that this cannot happen within the Democratic Party. If a workers party with some social weight existed, some of the more serious of these black Democrats would very likely come over to such a party.

Yes, Davis is to be commended for endorsing the action even though he was red-baited. But real revolutionaries would openly criticize his liberal, pro-capitalist program.

Note that the Spartacists' "Democrats who want to struggle" refers not to militant Black workers but to machine pols who betray these constituents by serving capitalism. Posturing as champions of Black defense is not at all "really unusual" for these types. As we commented at the time, "What is unusual is for the Spartacists to so openly applaud them and reveal that they themselves are a tail on the donkey."

Note also what this says of the SL and their "workers party." Either they imagine that Democratic leaders can be ultimately revolutionary, or else their party is in reality a reformist one well suited for pols with a social conscience.

The Spartacists' reports of their "leadership" in the CUNY struggle, like their lies about leftists, are obviously meant mainly for internal consumption. Funny how they accuse opponents of capitulating to the "appetites" they themselves have difficulty resisting. ●

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Summer 1995

New York: Mass Struggle Dissipated

The savage budget cuts in New York promoted by Governor Pataki and Mayor Giuliani triggered a big response by tens of thousands of workers and students this spring. Although the attack hits the entire working class, students took the lead in the fightback. The protest movement in the City University of New York (CUNY) was the largest student upheaval in the U.S. in 25 years — and unlike its 1960's counterpart, it was mainly working-class.

The eruption of Black and Latino working-class youth opened up the possibility of a general strike against all the budget cuts in New York. But the students' initiative and zeal was dissipated by a labor and student leadership unable to come up with any strategy except to appeal to the same bourgeois politicians who were leading the offensive.

This struggle gave the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) our best opportunity yet to offer leadership to young workers in struggle and win an audience for our program of proletarian socialist revolution. While the struggle did not realize its potential, revolutionary-minded workers and youth should consider the experience: it put our politics to the test against other groups claiming revolutionary answers.

WORKING-CLASS STUDENTS IN LEAD

Echoing the attacks coming from Congress and the President in Washington, the New York Republicans' cuts are aimed at solving the capitalists' crisis at workers' expense. All have a sharp racist character designed to split the working class. Pataki's program of destroying welfare, firing thousands of public workers, slashing education and drastically cutting already appalling health services, promised misery and even death for thousands. Giuliani upped the ante, demanding even deeper health and education cuts by the state so that the city's proportionate contribution could be reduced.

Amid howls of outrage by working people and token protests by union leaders, it is not surprising that CUNY was in the forefront of resistance. CUNY is a proletarian institution: three-quarters of its 213,000 students work for a living, half of those full-time (a reality apparently unknown to Giuliani, who told protesters to "find a job"). Since the 19th century, CUNY has been the hoped-for route to a decent job for working-class youth. After 1969, when a Black and Latino student struggle won open admissions, CUNY's enrollment began to reflect the city's working class.

CUNY was one of the institutions hardest hit by the cuts. Pataki and Giuliani would have removed a quarter of its



funding, wiping out dozens of departments, ending the SEEK program that provides aid for the neediest students, firing 1000 faculty and staff members and forcing a \$1000 (40 percent) tuition hike. This would devastate CUNY, making clear that the only future that capitalism offers Black and Latino youth is low-paid labor, poverty and prison.

The initial shock of the announced cuts led to a predictable response by university officials and union, faculty and student leaders: pilgrimages to the state capital in Albany to appeal to the legislature. Their focus was on the

continued on page 36