

# SOCIALIST VOICE



Re-create  
the Fourth International

Published by the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

## Stop U.S. Invasions! Renounce Imperialist Debt! Worldwide Confrontations Loom

"All may be fine in the world for the next six months or so, but then something is going to come undone."

The coiled spring of international tension has been visibly tightening. Ronald Reagan pumped up his hypocritical tirades against "communism" after the Russians shot down the South Korean airliner. For the first time since Vietnam, U.S. military forces stepped into a real shooting war, in Lebanon. The CIA is fighting a vicious undeclared war against Nicaragua. Iran has been open threatened, and Grenada is already invaded.

But the quotation above was not in reference to any of this. It was made by a leading European banker at the International Monetary Fund's September conference in Washington. He and many other spokesmen were warning of the economic conditions that underlie all the world's political conflicts. He meant the perilous state of the international banking system, that ever-inflating balloon of fictitious capital that threatens to explode every time debt payments fall due from any of a dozen tottering national economies. The bankers do not really know when disaster will hit, but they have every reason to know that it is on the way.

What frightens the international financiers most of all is not the collapse of a few more banks, nor even the possible fall of one or another Latin American government. It is the tidal wave that could engulf the world banking system and the

network of nation-states underlying it. The real danger for them is the reawakened mass reaction and its threat to the stability and survival of capitalism itself.

The upheaval gathering momentum throughout the world is typically national in form although genuinely international



Brazilian workers on the march. Fight to renounce imperialist debt could smash mounting counterrevolutionary attacks everywhere.

in essence. In Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Pakistan and the Philippines (to name only the most recent cases), mass upsurges, in large part centered on the urban working classes,

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## Democratic Party Disaster for Blacks

It is not unusual for the black leadership to be divided, so the current bitter dispute wracking the recognized black political establishment is hardly astonishing. Forces ranged

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around Rev. Jesse Jackson are pushing for his candidacy in the Democratic Party presidential primaries. Other leaders have favored early support to liberal white Democrats. But what is unusual is the political near-unanimity underlying the surface schism; both blocs agree on an electoral Democratic Party strategy for black America. This seeming paradox of schism and unity, however, only masks the crucial paradox: the unity so desperately needed by the black masses — indeed, by all workers — can come only through breaking the present coalescence at the top.

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# The Rape of Grenada: Never Again!

American imperialism has committed so many acts of barbarism that one can become inured to them. But then comes the invasion of Grenada: an act so naked, so brutal, so contemptible that all past crimes are remembered with searing intensity. 'Twas a noble victory: the biggest superpower on earth beat a country of 100,000 black people. They won one for the Gipper.

Normally U.S. imperialism cloaks its crimes under some threadbare mantle of "international law" in order to pretend it is a government of laws, not of vermin. This time it hardly even pretended. The U.S. claimed the right of invasion to protect Americans whose only danger came from the invasion itself. It claimed to be acting at the invitation of other Caribbean states, as if superpowers always obey their pawns. It claimed to be defending "democracy," as if U.S. allies (South Africa, South Korea, Chile, Pakistan, etc.) are habitually democratic. It claimed to be stopping a Russian and Cuban takeover; according to the U.S. script, that was the meaning of the military coup and the killing of Maurice Bishop. But Washington knew full well that both Cuba and the USSR prefer moderate revolutions and had condemned Bishop's murder.

All the excuses were blatant lies. This nakedness itself had a purpose. The U.S. has no love for its rival, the USSR, militarily strong but economically weak; nor for the Soviets' Cuban client state. But what Washington really was targeting was the explosion of the exploited masses throughout the world who are wracked by the agonies of the capitalist crisis. Upheavals are inflaming country after country: working

people in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, the Philippines, etc. are rebelling against the bloody dictatorships and austerity imposed by imperialism. What Reagan really meant to do was tell them that the U.S. will stop at nothing to quell mass upsurges and their challenge to capitalist property. The nakedness of Washington's attack on Grenada was no accident — that was its very purpose.

The U.S. seized on the Grenadian masses' disorientation after the coup to strike when resistance would be minimized. Reformist and nationalist misleaders of the masses will now teach the lesson that leftists should never attempt to overturn moderates during the course of a revolution. This is nonsense. The Bolsheviks overthrew Kerensky's Provisional Government in Russia in 1917, and that created a far greater unity, a qualitatively stronger struggle against imperialism. The coup against Bishop had nothing of this character. It was carried out not with the masses but behind their backs, and its policy was no less moderate than Bishop's in trying to reach a compromise with imperialism. The problem with Austin and Coard was not that they were too revolutionary or too "hard-line Marxist" but that they were not Marxist at all. (Coard may have been a Stalinist from the little we know; there is no trustworthy information available to us now as to what Austin was politically.)

The Caribbean and Latin masses have all been told by their "revolutionary" leaders that there is only one way to avoid imperialist intervention. It is critical to ally with the "good" national bosses, not threaten property too much, pay off religiously the staggering international debts — in general, offer concession after concession to placate imperialism. That is what Allende's Chile did a decade ago (with Cuba's blessing). That is what Poland's workers were told when Russian tanks menaced. That is what the Nicaraguans and Salvadoreans are being told today (by their leftist leaders and by Cuba): "Don't go too far." All this has done not one whit to prevent intervention. On the contrary: by weakening the masses' struggle and mobilization it has made intervention possible.

What is necessary is a united response of the working classes across national borders to each and every capitalist attack. To this end the revolutionary communist international party, the Fourth International, must be re-created. It would campaign to repudiate the imperialist debts and break the stranglehold of the capitalist world market. It would fight for a socialist federation of the Caribbean and Latin America. A Marxist

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- No. 3: The Class Nature of the Communist Parties.
- No. 4: The "Marxism" of the Petty Bourgeoisie — the Spartacist League and State Capitalism.
- No. 5: U.S. Labor and the Left; A Bukharinist Theory of State Capitalism.
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- No. 19: Black Upsurge and Electoral Trap; Karl Marx and the World Crisis; "Democratic Socialism."

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# Sri Lanka: Emergency Report

*The following report was written in early August in Sri Lanka. Because of the repression in that country its authors cannot be identified. It has been slightly edited here to conform with American usage.*

The worst pogrom in Sri Lanka's recent history against the Tamils was unleashed on the night of July 24 by Singhalese hoodlums, behind whom were unmistakably the leaders of the ruling party, the UNP.

It was obvious that the government would throw the blame for this holocaust on the Tamil politicians (Tamil United Liberation Front: TULF and Tamil Eelam Liberation Front: TELF) whose stated political goal was the realization (their democratic right) of a separate Tamil State, and Tamil "terrorists" who have for a considerable time now been defending the Tamil people of the North against the systematic terrorism of the government's armed forces.

But what was not obvious was that President Jayawardena would use this pogrom, unleashed by his own goonda organization, in order to declare war against the left movement, for the consolidation of his increasingly oppressive dictatorship, as the only means of sustaining capitalist class rule in Sri Lanka. This is precisely what Jayawardena has done.

On the sixth day after the outbreak of the pogrom, Jayawardena through his Minister of State, De Alwis, said that "This is not a mere Singhala-Tamil riot... This is part of a very deep plot to overthrow the government!" The immediate follow-up was the proscribing of three left parties: the Communist Party, the Nava Sama-Samaja Party and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramana. Detention orders were issued for 31 persons belonging to these parties. A few of these persons are already under arrest while others are yet to be arrested.

Jayawardena, who showed recently that he had learned many lessons from the fascist leader Hitler, is undoubtedly not unaware that Hitler organized the burning of the Reichstag building (the German House of Parliament) for his fabrication of a Communist plot to overthrow the government, to be followed by the massacre of the left. Inevitably, Jayawardena will soon reveal his own fabrication of the plot of the left parties to overthrow his government and to proceed to destroy the left movement.

## Atrocities against Tamils

In regard to the pogrom, it was not at all a case of the Singhalese and Tamil people using violence against each other — as government media sought to make out — but simply unprecedented violence against the Tamils and their property by Singhalese goondas, not only on the urban and suburban areas but throughout the country, including the plantations where Tamils of recent Indian origin worked and lived. Incidentally, this is the fourth pogrom of the Tamils since Jayawardena's UNP regime commenced in 1977.

Violence against Tamils included unspeakable atrocities, including rape and torture and the burning alive of Tamils. The property of the Tamils destroyed included their business houses, whole factories where it was known that Tamils had a major share, and their residences. Destruction of property was largely through setting fire by use of kerosene oil, petrol and the throwing of petrol bombs. Invariably looting of property took place.

All this violence by Singhalese hoodlums took place in the presence of the police and armed forces, whose personnel in

many places gave directions to the hoodlums to do their fell work. Simultaneously with the commencement of the pogrom in Colombo, it is widely known that the armed forces engaged in the massacre of hundreds of Tamils in the Tamil areas of the North. In fact, the government newspapers reported that in the city of Trincomalee (East Sri Lanka) about 130 men of the Sir Lanka Navy walked into a Navy armory, picked up weapons they wanted and went on for shooting practice into the bazaar area, and returned after killing as many Tamils as was possible.

Government's hand in the pogrom of Tamils has received incontrovertible proof in that on July 25, when this pogrom had got underway and was raging for well over 14 hours, 35 Tamil prisoners convicted or awaiting trial for offenses under the anti-Terrorist Act were simply slaughtered, allegedly by Singhalese prisoners who allegedly overpowered their guards. But the truth is that this slaughter was by the army personnel who had been stationed near the prison gates. And still more proof that the government directed the murders is the killing of 17 more Tamil prisoners one day after the previous slaughter (on July 27). It was once again the army men who did the killings.

## Government Complicity

Official news released by the government was that 279 were killed during this pogrom and 85,000 persons displaced. But the truth appears to be that several thousand Tamils died by killings at the hands of the Singhala goondas and of the armed forces, and that over 100,000 Tamils were rendered homeless.

It was not without significance that Jayawardena allowed the pogrom against the Tamils to go on for five days before he decided to speak to the nation. It was obvious that the least Jayawardena should have done as President was, at the very first news of the pogrom, to speak especially to the Singhalese people and appeal to them to stop the violence against the Tamil people. Jayawardena did not do that. What is the reason? The answer is that he gave the Singhala goondas time enough to do their fell work. When he was evidently satisfied that these Singhala goondas had done their work in five days, Jayawardena decided to speak to the nation. However, while he said he spoke "with deep regret and sorrow," Jayawardena did not express one word of sorrow for what had happened to the Tamil people and their property during the five days. Jayawardena blamed the Tamils for their movement for separation. Jayawardena announced stringent laws to ban separatism. It was not without justification that members of the Indian Lok Sabha (Parliament) denounced Jayawardena for his functioning as the leader of the Singhalese and for his failure to act as the leader of a nation.

In this same message Jayawardena said that the violence aimed at the Tamil people "has been caused by ill-feeling and the suspicion that has grown between the Singhalese and Tamil people for several years." It is not at all the case that the Tamil people had general animosity towards the Singhalese people. The truth is that anti-Tamil policies of successive capitalist governments (UNP, SLFP, SLFP-LSSP-CP) had led to the growth of anti-Tamil sentiment among considerable sections of the Singhalese people, especially during the present regime of Jayawardena.

Jayawardena sought to maintain that the main cause for antagonism of the Singhalese to the Tamils was the movement for a separate Tamil state since 1976. It is true that the

representative party of the Tamils, the TULF, adopted Tamil Eelam (a separate Tamil state) as their goal in 1976. But this demand was made after over three decades of failure and the refusal of successive Sinhala capitalist governments to grant the just demands of the Tamils, which included: 1) Recognition of Tamil as a national language also together with Sinhalese; 2) Ending of discrimination in regard to employment and the grant of government land in colonization schemes, 3) Ending of discrimination in regard to admission to higher educational institutions.

The response of successive capitalist governments in regard to these and similar just demands of the Tamils was to send the police to break up peaceful satyagraha movements and such

simply repeating their demands for a separate State — is exposed as hollow by his own very recent utterances. A recent interview Jayawardena gave the BBC was published coincidentally on the very day of the escalation of the pogrom (July 25) in the *Ceylon Daily News*, a government-owned publication. Here is what he said referring to the incidents of violence that had recently taken place in the Tamil areas:

"These have an origin of about 30 years by problems created by previous governments *when they made Sinhalese the only official language*. There has been a claim that Tamil also be an official language and from that a suggestion to a separate state came into being about 10 years" (our emphasis).

"I think they (the terrorists) have some foreign funding and



*Sri Lanka regime encourages Sinhalese massacres of Tamil minority. In Colombo, police watched as mobs and troops burned, looted Tamil shops.*



demonstrations organized by the Tamils to further their demands. The escalation of police violence against the Tamils and the deployment of the armed forces meant the torture and killings of Tamil youth by the armed forces.

It was in this context that the unification of Tamil parties and groups in the TULF took place in 1972, and in 1976 the demand for a separate Tamil state was adopted. However, it is a fact that although the TULF wielded very wide influence among the Tamils, and although this party won 17 seats in the 1977 parliamentary elections, winning for itself the office of the leader of the Opposition, yet this party did not take a single step towards the realization of their goal of a separate Tamil State. On the other hand, the TULF sought to cooperate with the Jayawardena UNP regime, although there was no basis to expect that this government would make any serious attempt to even consider favorably the long overdue demands of the Tamils, and although all the while the government was resorting to military-police suppression of the Tamils in the North.

The case Jayawardena sought to make against the TULF — that although the government had gone a long way to grant the demands of the Tamils, this party and the Tamils were

support and *they are not to my mind interested in a separate state, like all terrorists, it is a sui generis, of its own kind*" (our emphasis). Referring to the District Development Councils (a pretense of Regional Autonomy), Jayawardena said: "We created Development Councils ... But the complaint is that we have not fully implemented the Act by giving all the functions they are entitled to have, and by voting all the money they are entitled to get ..."

*Question:* I remember in 1977 during your elections, then this was one of the main planks. *Answer:* It is our manifesto.

*Question:* Why is this not being completely implemented? *Answer:* ... Democracy takes a little time. That law was passed ... Elections were held. Then they said — Where is the money? That takes a little time ... In the next Budget we will have it complete, by 1984.

*Question:* One of the other things that TULF complains about is that although you have made Tamil an official language, the implementation of the policy ... *Answer:* That's true. *It is practically out of my hands. It must be done by the officials and there is sabotage there. ...*

*Question:* How can officials sabotage something in an ef-



ficient and well run government? *Answer:* They can. *Where they should send a letter in Tamil to Tamil persons they send it in Singhalese* (our emphasis).

If indeed it is Jayawardena's position that the implementation of government policy in respect of the national language status granted to the Tamil language is out of his hands and that his officials are sabotaging his own policies, nothing more need be said of Jayawardena's desire to settle the pressing problems of the Tamils. It means simply that it was not the policy of the government to implement its own stated policy in regard to the Tamils.

Jayawardena stated much more explicitly his intentions regarding the solving of the problems of the Tamils when he gave on an earlier date an interview to the correspondent of the London *Daily Telegraph* published in the *Ceylon Daily News* of July 17: "President said to me 'It is no longer possible to argue, debate or talk with them' (terrorists, i.e., the TULF). He said he would be soon initiating intensified anti-terrorist efforts and had not ruled out the possibility of imposing martial law throughout the troubled Northern regions. ... The President disclosed that in the next two or three weeks he would be calling a round table conference of party leaders excluding the TULF. ... The primary object of the conference was how to eliminate terrorism. President said: 'I have tried to be effective for some time but cannot. I am not worried about the opinion of the Jaffna people now.' Specifically referring to the TULF, Jayawardena said: 'They used to speak on behalf of terrorists. But now all that is going to cease ... On the terrorist issues, these, we are going to deal with ourselves without any quarter being given'."

It was not at all a coincidence that Jayawardena's public announcements of imposing martial law throughout the "troubled Northern regions" etc., and his not being bothered about the opinion of the Tamils on their burning issues, were made when his government had begun to impose more and more burdens on the people by striking frontally at their living standards — through devaluation and the increase in the price of consumer goods, increase in the price of kerosene and petrol, etc. It is easy to understand that the growth of anti-Tamil sentiment leading to an anti-Tamil pogrom could well be an effective diversion of the preoccupations of the people from the blows struck against their living standards by the government in conformity to the demands made on it by the imperialist IMF. And this anti-Tamil pogrom was precisely what Jayawardena and his like-minded Tamil baiting Cabinet Ministers planned and realized. The outcome of the plans Jayawardena and his stooge Ministers hatched was this holocaust.

The biggest anti-Tamil pogrom in the black week of July was, in the eyes of a large section of the Sinhala masses, a significant achievement for the Singhalese. It may well be that for these masses they have found in Jayawardena a second Dutugemunu, the legendary Singhalese King who defeated and killed Elara, the Tamil King, and through this victory established the hegemony, and more, the sovereignty of the Singhalese people over Sri Lanka. And if the black week's happenings damaged the image of Sri Lanka internationally, yet for Jayawardena, locally and nationally, it was his finest hour!

The anti-Tamil pogrom was not the only achievement of Jayawardena for the Singhalese who have received an overdose of Singhala chauvinism. Jayawardena was the only head of state who made it possible to drive out of parliament the elected representatives of the Tamil people. In this regard, Jayawardena said in his message to the nation that his "government cannot see any other way in which we can ap-

pease the natural desire and request of the Singhala people to prevent the country being divided, and to see that those who speak for division cannot do so legally" (our emphasis).

Appeasing the Singhala racialists logically flowed from the Singhala chauvinism of Jayawardena and his party, the UNP, which is prominently and consistently part of its political make-up. Concretely, this appeasement was manifested in the passing of the infamous law to make it illegal for anyone to demand or call for or support the right of the Tamils for a separate state. The penalty for the contravention of this law is imprisonment up to 20 years and even death if anyone is actively in a separatist movement. It also means such an "offender" is liable for the deprivation of his civic rights, confiscation of property and being debarred from practicing a profession. By this same law, any member of parliament who fails to take an oath disavowing adherence to separatism loses his seat. This means that the members of parliament of the TULF will soon be out of parliament. Thus even as the UNP, with Jayawardena as a Minister, in 1948, 35 years ago, removed citizenship rights from about a million plantation workers of recent Indian origin, the same party under dictator Jayawardena has today disenfranchised the rest of the Tamil people. This infamous law, depriving the Tamil people of a fundamental democratic right, is unprecedented in any country which had or has any semblance of parliamentary democracy.

It is a rule that whenever a ruling capitalist regime succeeds in promoting ethnic tension and conflict and resorts to emergency rule, the regime moves sharply to the right, in the direction of reaction. In the present case Jayawardena has taken the opportunity, among other matters, to strike directly at the working-class and left movement by accusing baselessly three left parties of seeking to overthrow the government.

### Struggle against Oppression Posed

However absurd is this attempt to throw responsibility for an anti-Tamil pogrom on left parties, Jayawardena has a wider aim than destroying the left movement in Sri Lanka. His purpose was at the same time to win for himself and his regime approbation and approval of U.S. imperialism and to qualify for larger and larger doses of imperialist "aid." Jayawardena sought to achieve this by suggesting, without naming, that a foreign power, the Soviet Union, was guiding the left parties that planned and carried out this pogrom for the overthrow of the government.

Whatever Jayawardena and his ministers have said about having put an end to the Eelam (Tamil separate state) issue through their infamous law, they will soon learn that the Tamil problem remains and is more complicated than before. And in the context of thousands of Tamil refugees returning to Jaffna and the Tamil areas, and the disenfranchising of the Tamils, Jayawardena has created a de facto Tamil separate state.

In any event, the Tamil problem will loom large in the politics of Sri Lanka for several years to come. And as for today, the struggle against the oppression and subjugation of the Tamils is posed sharply as a continuing and urgent issue before the working class and the left parties in Sri Lanka. Obviously this is not a separate struggle from the struggle of the workers and toilers of the whole of Sri Lanka for the ending of the strengthened Jayawardena dictatorship. Thus there is an urgent need of forging a strong link between the oppressed Tamils and oppressed workers and toilers of the whole of Sri Lanka. Will the Tamil people, their organizations and the oppressed Sinhala masses and the left political parties see the problem as it is posed? ■

# THE RCP: SOCIALIST OR SOCIAL IMPERIALIST?

The leaflet below was distributed by the League for the Revolutionary Party in May at a "Conference and Debate" held in New York under the title, "The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social Imperialist?" The conference was initiated by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), one of the few Maoist organizations that survived the ideological turmoil in the Chinese Communist Party after Mao Tse-tung's death in 1976.

The "debate" at the conference was narrowly proscribed. Political presentations were invited representing two points of view only: the Maoist doctrine that the Soviet Union turned sour only after Stalin's death in 1953, and the pro-Moscow view that it remains "socialist." Trotskyist presentations were specifically rejected, although the LRP and other tendencies were able to intervene from the floor. The RCP's goal was to demonstrate to the Maoist and ex-Maoist milieu that it alone could uphold the Great Helmsman's teachings. Unfortunately for the RCP, few pro-Soviet people attended (aside from the handful of invited academic speakers and the neo-Stalinist Spartacist League) and fewer participated in the discussion. The Maoists were by and large preaching to the already converted.

For its proclaimed purpose of debate and clarification, the conference proved to be a farce. Most presentations, especially those by the RCP and its Maoist allies, were empirical and theoretically slovenly. When challenged on points of fact or theory, they hid behind the loyalty of the bulk of the audience to avoid serious replies.

Two particular attitudes of the RCP merit specific condemnation. One was the constantly repeated criticism of the "Soviet invasions of Afghanistan and Angola." This is a severe

The question of the class nature of the Soviet Union has been fought out many times throughout its stormy history of revolution and counterrevolution. Understandably so, for the "Russian question" dominates the most basic questions of Marxist theory and international politics. But none of the past debates were as fruitless as this one that the RCP has cooked up within the Stalinist family (or as much of it as is willing to play along).

On one side, we will hear the old-line Stalinist claim that the USSR is "socialist," now justified by the methods of bourgeois sociology that can prove there is no ruling class (no great feat, since the same techniques "prove" that there is no ruling class in the U.S. either). On the other side is the RCP itself, with its dewy-eyed discoveries that Stalin had "weaknesses" and made "errors" and got a "muddled" position — but not an ounce of Marxist analysis that could come to grips with the counterrevolutionary Stalinism that destroyed the Soviet workers' state.

## When Does Imperialism Become Imperialist?

The RCP is terribly proud of knowing that the USSR is capitalist and that its world position is that of an imperialist power. Such pride is entirely undeserved. The RCP came to this position rather late in the day, when the decline in the USSR's vaunted "socialist" expansion of the productive forces was becoming painfully obvious; and for highly self-serving reasons, since the RCP Maoists followed the Chinese CP in labeling Moscow capitalist only when this served China's nationalist purpose of preparing a de facto alliance with U.S. imperialism. But as for the days when Russian imperialism was at its most expansionist after World War II, when the Soviet Army was dividing up Europe and Asia with the West on the basis of the inter-imperialist Yalta Pact, when Soviet tanks were crushing workers' revolutions in East Germany and Hungary — when it comes to those days the RCP doesn't scream "social imperialist" but instead calls the USSR "socialist" and presumably supports its imperialist conquests. That is a record to be ashamed of, not proud of.

distortion. The USSR did indeed invade Afghanistan in 1979 in order to defend the shaky bourgeois-nationalist revolution under attack from reactionary landlords and tribal leaders — but especially to destroy the revolutionary leadership and force the revolution to retreat from its few gains in the hope of maintaining Soviet dominance, pacifying the border, and even effecting a compromise with the Western-aided rebels. Both the Soviet imperialists and the reactionary Afghan "freedom fighters" must be condemned.

But in Angola, Soviet arms and Cuban troops played a two-sided role; they stepped into the civil war in 1975 after the country had been invaded by forces of apartheid South Africa. This defensive role called for military support, along with political opposition to their propping up of the bourgeois MPLA government against the masses' aspirations. The Soviet-Cuban intervention maintained Angola's nominal independence while keeping it safely within the sphere of world — chiefly U.S. and Western European — imperialism. Today, the RCP's one-sided call for Cuban withdrawal could only mean support for more direct Western and South African domination of Southern Africa.

Secondly, our leaflet attacked the RCP's disdain for workers' material gains. This attitude was grossly evident. When one pro-Moscow panelist noted that the vast majority of Soviet workers now have refrigerators, the RCPers present burst into laughter. One retorted that "refrigerators freeze not only food but also bourgeois relations" — the workers are better off without. This contempt for the well-being of the workers that these pseudo-communists claim to support succinctly demonstrated the petty-bourgeois composition and ideology of the Maoists.

On the question of Eastern Europe, by the way, the RCP has a lot of nerve calling Stalin muddled; its own scripture is about as muddled as mud can be. On the one hand, there is the offhand comment by Chairman Avakian last year that "it has to be said bluntly that socialism never existed in these Eastern European countries" (*Revolution* No. 50, page 28). On the other hand, the old faith that Stalin spread socialism wherever he trod is repeated in the RCP's new book *The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social-Imperialist* (page 142); here the RCP refers to post-war Russia and Eastern Europe as part of the "socialist camp" — and this comes not in a reprint of an old article written before Chairman Bob's revelation but in the March 1983 introduction.

Even debater Al Szymanski, who thinks that the workers really rule Russia, admits that the USSR had "exploitative relations" and "dictated" unequal terms of trade with Eastern Europe before the mid-1950's. He at least doesn't have the problem of explaining how Russia was "socialist" when it was greedily looting East Europe but then became imperialist later on when it had to struggle to squeeze a kopeck out of its satellites. But that's what you get when you try to analyze Stalinism with Stalinist methods.

Perhaps the RCP believes that its muddle should be forgiven; after all, Avakian's comments were in a talk that he himself said shouldn't be taken too seriously. "The attempt is not going to be made to present worked out ideas"; many of these theses are only "tentative"; "This is likely to be ... somewhat scattered and ... a little bit trippy." And so it was. But then the RCP went and devoted 50 pages of a 50-page magazine to these scattered, tentative and unworked-out ideas.

False modesty has always been one of the RCP's least endearing characteristics. Take their continual disclaimers on post-war Eastern Europe. Nine years ago in *Red Papers* 7, the RCP (then the RU) admitted that "We in the RU have not yet completed our research on the question of East Europe and we do not as yet fully understand the particularities of capitalist restoration in these countries." In the new



book on the Soviet Union they repeat, "Marxist-Leninists must still develop a more thorough understanding of the capitalist workings of the Eastern European economies and their relationship with the Soviet Union ..." (page 204). And Avakian chimes in on the same subject, "I don't claim at this point to have unraveled this muddle..." People who haven't figured out which class ruled, whether the proletariat was master or slave, which side to support when conquering armies rolled through — should keep their mouths shut and stop pretending to be Marxists and communists. They are playing children's games with life and death questions.

Those who admit that they can't decide whether a country has a brutal, miserable, dictatorial reactionary chauvinist capitalist state or one embarked upon the road to progress and plenty for human salvation (a socialist society) are by that fact alone shouting from the rooftops that they don't know which end is up, that something is bizarrely wrong with the way they look at the world. And when you couple this studied ignorance with the insistence by the same people that they are the bearers of the revealed line — then you have Avakian's RCP.

The RCP's arrogant confusionism doesn't apply only to this kind of backhanded defense of Russian imperialism. They give a helping hand to the West as well. Who is it that gets up at meetings on El Salvador and Nicaragua and opines that although U.S. imperialism is bad, we shouldn't forget Soviet social imperialism in Central America too? Wake up, muddle-heads! When it comes to the U.S.'s "backyard," the Soviets are a third-rate piddling imperialism that can't even finance its own clients. Russian imperialism is vicious enough in its own sphere without having to be mechanically inflated beyond belief.

Such distortions arise from slavishly following the Chinese party line under the "immortal" Mao. It wasn't just the post-Mao "revisionists," remember, who backed racist South Africa's agents in Angola, supported the crushing of radical youth rebels in Sri Lanka, admired the bloody Shah in Iran and Mobutu in Zaire, and aided the Pakistani militarists in trying to smash the independence of Bangladesh — all moves in harmonious resonance with U.S. foreign policy. Mao was a master at using radical rhetoric to cover counterrevolutionary acts. When Deng Xiaoping cemented his alliance with Washington, he was only following the course charted under the Great Helmsman. And Maoists like the RCP played their despicable role too, cheerleading or apologizing for every swivel.

### What Is "Social Imperialism"?

Even the Maoist term for the USSR, "social imperialism," is slimy. Words like "social imperialist," "social pacifist," etc. have been traditionally used by Leninists to refer to rotten politics held by tendencies in the workers' movement. The USSR's rulers have not been part of the working class for decades; there is nothing "social" about their imperialism. The Chinese CP may well have chosen the term with this in mind, keeping open the option of reversing its verdict at some point and labeling Russia "socialist" again (as it has already done with Yugoslavia). Or else the term may have been intended to place Russia in a different category from the U.S. — a worse one — in order to justify backing the U.S. Either way the term is unscientific and un-Marxist. And using it to give tacit support to imperialism, as do tendencies in the working class such as the RCP, is itself precisely social imperialist.

Why is it that an organization that wants desperately to look revolutionary can't straighten out the perennial pro-imperialist twists in its line? Fundamentally, it's because the RCP is saddled with an ideological burden, a twisted heritage, that the most indomitable will in the world can't overcome. Stalinism and Maoism are pro-bourgeois, nationalist, counterrevolutionary ideologies: the antithesis, not the continuation, of Marxism and Leninism.

Take the RCP's conception of socialism, the decisive question in this whole debate. "What makes ... a society socialist is the fact that a proletarian line is overall in command ..." — a thoroughly idealist, non-dialectical definition. The RCP gets this idea from Mao: "The rise to power of revisionism means the rise to power of the bourgeoisie," as if bad ideas alone define a ruling class. This enables the RCP to see "socialism" disappear in Russia and China simply when a Great Leader dies, despite the absence at the time of

counterrevolutionary struggles or any significant shift in the masses' material conditions. Seeing imperialism as a matter of the rulers' policy and not as a material question is the essence of what Lenin called Kautskyism. It applies equally to the RCP's version of "capitalism."

Trying to give its idealism a Marxist cover, the RCP theorists repeatedly insist that Khrushchev's rise to power after Stalin's death was "a real class struggle." But in *Red Papers 7*, the only attempt to substantiate this claim, they admit that the anti-Khrushchevites "failed to bring the struggle out of the Politbureau and to the masses." Then they resort to their typical pseudo-modesty for evading tough questions: "We do not know all the circumstances which prevented the proletarian forces from bringing the struggle into the open, developing mass action. Nor are we clear on exactly who did represent the proletarian line." Some class! Some struggle! Some Marxism.

Most importantly, the Maoist theory enables the RCP to overlook Stalin's vicious slashing of the workers' and farmers' living standards



*Typical sycophantic idealization of Joseph Stalin. When that God failed, the RCP bowed to Mao the Magnificent; now it worships the Word of Chairman Bob. From barbarian to betrayer to boob.*

in the USSR throughout the 1930's, the blow after blow directed at proletarian rights and achievements won during the revolution — in a word, the counterrevolutionary dynamic that culminated in the restoration of capitalism on the eve of World War II — all because, in Avakian's "tentative" language, "basically and in the main, Stalin represented the most correct and principally the correct position at that time."

And if Khrushchev could restore capitalism by fiat, what was to stop him from making it superpowerful? The RCP has no conception that Soviet imperialism is far weaker than the U.S. on a world scale, because the Soviet workers' revolutionary gains are a mixed blessing for the rulers who usurped them; no conception that Russian capitalism is distorted not only by the imperialist epoch in general but by its own counterrevolutionary heritage as well. That is, the proletarian revolution was a material force that has been negated but not annihilated — not just a terrific idea in some bureaucrats' heads.

### The Real Meaning of Socialism

The RCP's definition of socialism is neither Marx's nor Lenin's — and not even Stalin's. For Marx, the dictatorship of the proletariat meant the society transitional to communism, the most advanced mode of production possible; Marx did not name it socialism. Lenin and the Bolsheviks used "socialism" to refer to what Marx had called the lower stage of communism, a stage in which bourgeois remnants would still exist but separate social classes would not. Lenin had good reason not to call the USSR socialist: even the genuine workers' USSR had not come near surpassing the productivity of

capitalism. Calling it a higher mode of production would have been a joke. The term is an even grimmer joke applied to the "socialist" countries today, whose productivity compared to old-style capitalism is not only behind but is losing ground.

Stalin declared the USSR "socialist" in the mid-1930's with the adoption of the new Constitution, after the completion of the first Five Year Plan and his bloody agricultural collectivization. The reason was that individual private property had been abolished. Stalin did not claim that the USSR had been socialist since 1917; only that he had made it so. And at the same time he decreed that the USSR was no longer a dictatorship of the proletariat but a "state of the whole people" — as if a state would be needed once "the whole people" is in power! (No, RCP, it wasn't your revisionist Khrushchev who invented this lying, internally contradictory term.)

Maoists today tend to define socialism as equivalent to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Why? For one thing, they are now compelled to argue that nationalized property does not define socialism, so Stalin's usage won't do. For another, they have to make their theory jibe with declarations of rulers like Mao who refused for years to call China, Eastern Europe, etc. proletarian because they were conciliating the local bourgeoisies. That's when the weasel words "new democracy" and "people's democracy" came into vogue. Muddying everything under the heading "socialism" avoids the basic question of which class was in power.

Finally, they have to somehow take into account Lenin's oft-repeated view that socialism was impossible without the international expansion of the worker's revolution; i.e., that Stalin's invention after Lenin's death of "socialism in one country" was hogwash. Blurring the terminology so that a vague "socialism" is indistinguishable from the dictatorship of the proletariat accomplishes this deed, since no Marxist denies that the proletarian dictatorship could and did occur in one country.

The whole Stalinist-Maoist enterprise of toying with fundamental definitions serves only the shifting purposes of rulers trying to deceive the working class in order to subject it. It lays bare the fraudulent and blatantly revisionist character of the whole anti-proletarian tradition.

### The Productive Forces

The RCP scorns the idea that workers' material conditions have anything to do with socialism. Yet, lo and behold, the very same idea crops up regularly in the writings and speeches of Lenin — so Lenin too gets dumped on by Avakian for "a certain bourgeois logic." In fact, Avakian has to admit that "it wasn't only the Trotskyites" who believed that Russia's isolation and backwardness ruled out the idealist (and in practice counterrevolutionary) dream of socialism in one country — "this was Lenin's idea" too. Mao forbid, Avakian murmurs, Lenin also had the "theory of the productive forces."

Yes indeed, Lenin was a "Trotskyist" — that is, he was an internationalist, a fighter dedicated to the victory and well-being of the working class — not like Stalin, Mao, Avakian and other maneuverers and traitors to the working class who don't know or care whether the workers rule or slave, live or die, eat or starve.

The RCP's version of "socialism" is no more dialectical than its apparent opposite, the theory held by Moscow's defenders that the USSR is socialist because property is nationalized and no discernible ruling class with private ownership of the means of production exists. This ahistorical, static theory ignores the social relations of production — the very real power relations of wages, surplus-value and armed force that dominate the "Soviet" system and make use of the state property. It forgets that the Soviet workers once did rule and were later ousted from power. It swallows whole the tales told in *Pravda* and the official Constitutions of Brezhnev and Stalin about contented masses who still have unions and democratic rights. And "Marxists" like Szymanski are capable of noticing Stalin's exploitation of East Europe without realizing this means imperialism.

The RCP uses the very same method when it looks at Stalin's rule in the 1930's — and so can't tell the difference between a genuine workers' state and the corruptions engineered by Stalin and Mao. Then it manufactures a magical overnight change, mindlessly violating the dialectical principle that class power changes only through struggle. The RCP's claptrap has the same purpose as that of the pro-Moscow revisionists: to label as socialism the enslavement of the working class. "Revisionism" is the mildest of terms for this brand of

charlatantry. Marx liked a better, more concise and more scientific term: crap.

### The RCP Faced with Trotskyism

The RCP has one little problem to deal with in its soul-searching efforts to uncover "mistakes" in the crimes of Stalin (and in the contributions of Lenin): the real job of finding the Marxist truth about the cataclysmic events of the 1930's has already been accomplished. It was done at the time, not fifty years too late, by Trotsky and the Trotskyists, who painstakingly unmasked every Stalinist lie, every crime against the workers committed in the name of Bolshevism. To the extent that there is any value in Avakian's "ground-breaking" efforts, he stole it from Trotskyism. It was Trotskyism that exposed the Stalinists' counterrevolutionary work in the Spanish Civil War; it was Trotskyism that fought the Soviet Union's "bourgeois-democratic" conduct of World War II; it was the Trotskyists who campaigned for revolution among the workers after the war, in contrast to Stalin (who, according to even Avakian, "did what he could do ... to kill the revolutionary struggle of the masses in order not to bring down the wrath of U.S. imperialism"). For once Avakian is right about what Stalinism stood for: killing the masses' struggle and propping up the dominant imperialists, as well as grabbing its own share of the spoils.

Some revolutionary-minded young people have been attracted to the RCP by its seeming radicalism at a time when most of the left is moving rapidly rightward. But they are being cruelly deceived. Not one concession to U.S. imperialism is permissible for American radicals living in the heart of reaction, not one concession to anti-proletarian Stalinism. To those RCPers and others who are searching for the truth about the history of the USSR and Stalinism, we say: Get away from the apologetics of the Avakians and Szymanskis, the Stalinist brothers-under-the-skin whose pseudo-erudition and not-even-pseudo-dialectical manderings only serve to bury the truth under mounds of mud. Read Trotsky! If you want to see what real Marxist prose and analysis looks like, what it really means to stand up for the interests of the proletariat and the oppressed — take a look at Trotsky's writings of the 1930's. If your stomach can handle it, compare them with Stalin's crap. Read Stalin's speeches on the Great Patriotic War — and see if you can refrain from ripping that vile, racist, chauvinist, pro-imperialist garbage into shreds, page by page. And it's no "muddle," either — it's conscious, self-serving lies. Open your eyes, comrades, open your eyes.

It is another endearing Stalinist characteristic to consciously ignore the true history of Trotskyism, regurgitating the whole panoply of Stalin's lies in order to shove aside the one Marxist current that fought and survived the corruptions of Stalinism and Social Democracy. Decades of debate on the nature of the USSR are part of this history, debates far better grounded in Marxism than anything the Maoists and ex-Maoists are producing. The Trotskyist current made its share of errors over Russia — errors that the Maoists are now repeating in gross forms, and with none of the Trotskyists' contributions. Marx was right again when he observed that history repeats itself as farce!

To learn the truth about what happened since World War II, you have no choice except to read the articles in *Socialist Voice*, the magazine of the League for the Revolutionary Party. We are Trotskyists, we have been writing extensively about the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and its role as an imperialist power and prop since the war (among other questions). We believe that our work is the only basis for understanding the great events of recent decades, the massive uprisings of workers in dozens of countries — and the slimy betrayals that have kept them from socialist victories time and again, by the Social Democrats, Communist Parties, Maoists and other centrists.

There is only one road forward for the proletariat today: the rediscovery of Marxism, the revival of the proletarian internationalism that won so resounding a victory in Russia in 1917 — a victory that still shapes the course of history. Even though it was defeated, it wasn't annihilated. This means the re-creation of the World Party of Socialist Revolution — the Fourth International that Trotskyism laid the basis for in the 1930's. If you want to learn the truth, if you want to fight the only battle worth fighting, for the socialist revolution — join us.



# European Social Democracy

## vs. Workers

In country after country in Western Europe, social democratic parties and governments have been proving themselves once again enemies of the millions of working class people who vote for them. For those who remember the role of social democratic reformism during and after the First World War in derailing workers' struggles and setting the masses up for violent reaction, today's betrayals come as no surprise. But in leaving middle-class and working class masses with the idea that "socialism" is part of their problem rather than the solution, they help set the stage for a strengthened right-wing reaction.

No left alternative today is offered by the Communist Parties, for the most part either allied with or indistinguishable from the social democrats. And so are the self-styled Marxists, Leninists and even Trotskyists of the European far left. These tendencies, which achieved some prominence in the workers' upheavals of the late 1960's, have grown soft on social democracy. What they once understood as counterrevolution has become for them second-best to revolution: imperfect but progressive, especially if aided by the leftists' support. Reflecting a radical wing of the middle class, they are becoming the main "critical" cheerleaders for social-democratic reformism.

### Socialists Defend Capitalism

What is happening in Europe to set such developments in motion? Unable to bring about anything resembling an economic recovery, the bourgeoisie has stepped up its offensive against the working classes. Many of the gains won by workers through decades of struggle are being wrenched away. The lash of austerity is being felt with particular severity by the British working class as the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher cuts deeper into social services. Unemployment in Europe has reached its highest level since the depression of the 1930's. In many countries it now exceeds 11 percent. Among workers under the age of 25 it is as high as 42 percent. In Britain nearly half of the 3.5 million unemployed fall into that category. Under capitalism many of these unemployed workers will never get a job.

It is not only conservatives who are leading the capitalist attack. The social democratic parties, once created by the working class, have come in the epoch of imperialism to reflect the views of an aristocracy of relatively privileged workers who have a stake in the system. These parties have an edge over their conservative rivals: their history offers the possibility of ensnaring the workers in support of continued capitalism rule so that social upheaval can be contained and the potential revolution deterred.

For example, the Socialist Party of Greece promised the workers before it was elected to office in 1981 that it would free their unions from government interference and legalize political strikes. Now in power, Socialist Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu is leading a major crackdown on public employee unions. He recently rammed through parliament legislation making it extremely difficult for public employee unions to call strikes. This blatant attempt to cripple the unions was described by Papandreu as part of "the socialization of the public sector" designed to give "greater

control to the people whose lives are affected by these services." No amount of socialist rhetoric can hide the fact that Papandreu wants to keep things firmly under the control of the capitalist state. The unions along with the Communist Party, in a safety-valve response to the pressure of the workers, challenged the government's legislation and called for a limited 24-hour general strike.

A wage freeze imposed by the "socialist" government has fueled its pro-capitalist program. And to emphasize its commitment to world counterrevolution, the Papandreu regime



*French workers protested factory closing by blocking bridge for 12 hours in March. Popular front regime proves again that reformism is workers' enemy.*

beat a hasty retreat on its firm commitment to pull Greece out of NATO and agreed to allow the U.S. to keep its military bases. Once again social democracy shows that its true loyalty is to imperialism.

The French Socialists' sweep into power in May 1981, with a program of nationalization of industry and the promise to carry out socialist measures, certainly raised the expectations of the French workers. The presence of the Gaullists and Left Radicals in the government was designed, however, to reassure the bourgeoisie that the Socialist government was committed to maintaining capitalism. The ranks of the Socialist Party are made up mostly of white collar workers and sections of the middle class. It is nonetheless a working class party in origin and receives workers' votes en masse. Despite capitalism's fear of anything with a working-class or anti-private property taint, the French bourgeoisie hopes that the new popular front government would not only deter class struggle but also squeeze fresh sacrifices out of the workers. After all, a conservative government resorting to open repression would have

risked mass upheavals trying to achieve the same goals.

Once in office, Francois Mitterrand scrapped his program of economic stimulation and reform. Austerity (labeled "enhanced stringency") was placed on the order of the day. President Mitterrand's present program makes the previous government's openly bourgeois austerity seem mild by comparison. Following a 10 percent increase in the minimum wage and a one-hour reduction in the work week, the government unveiled its real economic program of a general wage freeze and wage cuts in certain industries. The unions in the state-owned steel companies were forced to accept a wage cut. The unions were also pressured into giving up what has been a long-standing gain of linking wages to price increases. There have been severe cuts in social security. Increased taxes on alcohol and tobacco are part of the attempt to bleed the workers even more.

Despite sacrifices made by the workers and two devaluations of the franc, France remains in the grip of economic crisis. The Socialist Party is now wracked by disagreements over what course to take. The left wing of the party considers the austerity program to be insufficient and wants to substitute for it a more openly protectionist one, which it believes will eliminate foreign competition. Ironically, this has won it the support of Gaullists and right-wing French nationalists.

In serving the interests of French capitalism Mitterrand also defends French and world imperialism. The only disarmament Mitterrand supports is somebody's else's. Meanwhile the build-up of the French nuclear force continues. The Socialist Party in 1981 said that it would not intervene in Chad. French troops today are pouring into Chad to defend French interests in Africa.

### No Left Alternative in France

The "socialist" regime is also presiding over a build-up of anti-immigrant chauvinism. Its junior partner, the French Communist Party (CP), also has a record of channeling the despair of its working-class followers into anti-foreigner attacks. Couple this with Mitterrand's proposals for the overhaul of industry, nationalizations (with generous compensation, of course) and more planning in the interest of making France "more competitive," and the modern reformist "solution" to the crisis of capitalism becomes clear. Increasing statification and protectionism in the interest of nationalism and, inevitably, chauvinism.

This program feeds on the backward consciousness among workers; but since it demands deeper austerity as its price it has yet to win widespread support. Workers' disillusionment with the SP and its cure for the economic crisis at their expense was reflected in the results of the municipal elections last March. Thirty cities that had previously been under Socialist control went to the conservative opposition. This also reflects a political shift to the right by the middle class, which has grown increasingly desperate as the crisis deepens. The CP, which has a few token ministers in the government, has also suffered a decline, despite its desire not to be identified with the SP's austerity program. Its only solution to the crisis, however, has been to demand that it be given a greater role in managing industry under the new government schemes.

Despite the workers' disillusionment in social democracy, they have not found any far-left alternative which has won their respect, much less their allegiance. During the 1981 elections the self-styled Trotskyist groups in France, refusing to acknowledge the popular-front character of the alliance between the SP and bourgeois parties, urged the workers to vote for Mitterrand. To add to their treachery, they told the workers that it was possible to push an essentially capitalist

government to the left and force it to "carry out socialist measures." They failed to warn the workers that once in power Mitterrand, in defending the interests of the capitalists, would be forced to attack the workers. Every capitalist government must attempt such an assault. The French social democratic government is no exception. To achieve socialism it is necessary for the working class to create a revolutionary party and overthrow the capitalist state. Reformism and the social democracy remain dangerously counter-revolutionary obstacles to the working class in reaching its goal.

The working class in Britain has also demonstrated that it has no confidence in reformism, represented by the Labour Party. Despite the assault by the Thatcher government on their standard of living and vicious attacks on the unions, workers rallied to the Conservatives in large numbers in last June's election. The Labour Party suffered its worst defeat since 1922. The Conservatives won 397 seats out of 650, giving them a 140-seat majority. The Social Democratic Party, formed by right-wing Labourites splitting from the Labour Party in response to the growing power of the "lefts," allied with the middle-class Liberal Party and managed to draw away many Labour voters.

### Left Labourites Flounder

A particular reason for the workers' loss of faith in Labour was Thatcher's successful imperialist performance in the 1982 Malvinas (Falklands) war (see *Socialist Voice* No. 17 for our analysis). At first, British workers did not readily accept the chauvinist drumbeats of the politicians and the press. But Thatcher's determination looked strong in contrast to the Labour leadership's typically hesitant support and the left wing's cowardly and vacillating social pacifism. The left initially dodged the war question and ultimately sought a compromise "solution," once again registering as mush and muddle. No wonder workers looked elsewhere. In a similar way, workers in the U.S. who voted for Reagan were showing that they desperately wanted something very different from the floundering Carter.

"Left" leader Tony Benn, a great favorite of the growing number of professed Trotskyists inside the Labour Party, boasted of Labour's "victory"! Even losing his own seat after thirty years in Parliament did not dampen his enthusiasm. "For the first time since 1945, a political party with an openly socialist policy received the support of over 8½ million people," Benn claimed. And the far-leftist Labourites endorsed Benn's nonsense.

The far left almost in its entirety supported Labour in the election. For several years, many leftists had swarmed into the party, lemming-like, while industrial workers were growing steadily disillusioned. As in France, much of this support was based on Labour's economic program, especially the palliatives acclaimed by the Bennites as "socialism." But this amounted really to state capitalism and nationalism; the fervent cries of the leftists to withdraw from the Common Market had everything to do with "tight little island" chauvinism and nothing in common with authentic socialist internationalism.

### Pacifist Movement Gains

One additional factor was strong in Britain, unlike in France, but it highlights a characteristic of the reformist left everywhere today. There was a large peace movement dedicated to the position of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Given Britain's historic class polarization in politics — between the Tories identified with national capitalism and military imperialism, and the Labour Party built by the trade



unions — the peace movement had no choice but to orient toward the latter. The workers' strength, distorted through its Labour Party reflection, has been a magnet for innumerable middle-class causes and panaceas. Unilateral disarmament is only the latest, and the party as a whole — not just the left — adopted this position.

But most workers, whatever their political consciousness, understand that a modern imperialist nation in an imperialist world will not and cannot surrender its chief weapons. In recognition of imperialism's needs, the Labour right openly rejected its own party program, while the left spokesmen performed their normal vacillation act in public. Utopian disarmament policies are a clue to the fact that the social base for left reformism is really in the radicalized sectors of the middle class, white collar workers and sections of the labor bureaucracy. The "left" has little attraction for the mass of industrial workers who are searching for a realistic way out of desperation.

If the fear of nuclear war is deep in Britain, it is all the greater in Germany, the likely cockpit of any future major



*West Berlin anti-missile protest. The road to war is once again paved with pacifist and nationalist revivals.*

war. Here the middle-class peace and ecology tendencies have flowed into a political formation outside of both the traditional bourgeois Christian Democrats and the century-old Social Democratic Party (SDP) once built by Marxist workers. The Social Democrats were at the helm of the West German government for so long, and so committed to the Western alliance and its military build-up, that the Green Party was able to emerge as an independent force.

The stewardship of the Social Democrats over German capitalism also created growing indifference by industrial workers. Germany's economy was comparatively healthy, but it too went into reverse gear in 1981 under the Social Democrats. Despite growing unemployment, the SDP campaign in last spring's federal election leaned towards the low investment policies of middle-class radicals in order to compete with the Greens; this did not endear the party to workers, and the Christian Democrats won comfortably. The SDP has made sizeable local gains since the federal elections. But of far greater significance were the massive protest

demonstrations by workers in Bonn and Hamburg against the unemployment and austerity continuing under the Christian Democrats.

### **Moderates Move to Right**

Although for the moment the crisis has channeled middle-class radicalism into the independent Green Party, it is inevitable that the Green's strength will decline. Only briefly can the social democratic left and their "Marxist" allies operate successfully under the delusion that there is a third possible class force between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. As the crisis deepens, the socially vulnerable layers will become more desperate and look for stronger alternatives than their present pacifist and ecological leaders can provide. Some will turn to the Social Democrats; others to more radical formations, right as well as left. Utopian solutions calling for peace and prosperity under decaying capitalism will be abandoned, and real ones found: either fascism to preserve capitalism through massive repression and war, or proletarian revolution to destroy it.

Already, moderate wings and allies of social democracy — some union leaders and the more entrenched petty bourgeois elements — are turning openly and directly to the bourgeoisie. Hence the so-called Social Democrats in Britain and its Liberal Alliance; hence the switch of the German Free Democrats from coalition with the SDP to partnership with the Christian Democrats. The "left" social democrats' appeals to the workers do serve to frighten the moderates with the threat to private property, even though their programs offer nothing real to the working class.

Under crisis conditions, the left reformists and their centrist supporters all over Europe are coming up with "socialistic" plans to satiate their national capitals — accompanied by pacifistic hoopla. In the real world of competitive national rivalries, these nationalistic platforms only point the masses to the "real" nationalist answers, fascism and war.

### **Revolutionary Leadership**

A comparison with the 1930's is useful. Then too the social democratic parties crumbled as the struggle between capital and the workers became more intense. Then too, "moderate" layers moved rightward — some all the way to fascism — while left wingers were drawn to the Communist Parties which could still give off the illusion of revolution and could identify with a workers' state in the USSR. Today there are no workers' states and no mass communist alternatives, so the leftward pulls are more vacillating and more middle-class. As well, the new great depression of a 1930's dimension has not yet matured, and the industrial proletariat has only engaged in scattered mass actions. It has yet to present its challenge for power.

In the 1930's the proletariat was defeated primarily because the once-revolutionary Communist Parties led them into class collaboration through the vehicle of popular front governments and blocs. Today, the flotsam and jetsam of the divided centrist left cannot provide the industrial battalions of the old CP's to prop up popular-front reformism. But as in the thirties, reformist failures are again paving the way for fascism. Social democratic policies cannot save capitalism from decay and, inevitably, both middle class and proletariat will seek out radical alternatives. The weakness of pseudo-revolutionary centrism today is a major cause for hope that the coming proletarian upheaval will be able to create its own revolutionary leadership in time to lead the working class out of the dead-end of reformism. As well, such an alternative could win the mass of middle-class people away from the disaster being prepared by their present leaders. ■

# Imperialist Debt

*continued from page 1*

are challenging the U.S.-backed dictators who prop up the financial and military structure of world imperialism. In Poland in 1980, Mexico last year and Argentina and Brazil today, it was specifically the debt burden, forcing governments to slash workers' living standards, that triggered political crises. The same burdens are behind the cutbacks in social services all across the U.S. over the last decade, and are now undermining the "welfare states" of Western Europe (under both right-wing and nominally left-wing governments.) Now that mass revolts are breaking out, it is necessary to raise the proletarian strategy to deal with the crisis of capitalism. An important key to unlocking the struggle is the imperialist debt.

The cold and hot war headlines reflect increased world tensions but do not explain them. The threats, counter-threats, war preparations and interventions of the U.S. and USSR are results, not the causes, of the underlying instability. It is the capitalist system itself that is tearing apart.

## Why Capitalism Is in Crisis

In its two centuries of world domination capitalism has ruthlessly developed production to the point where the technology exists to create universal abundance for the first time. Class oppression, inequality and war could now be cast aside as relics of human pre-history. However, in this epoch of imperialism, capitalism stands as a barrier to the further advance of the productive forces. It has created instead a world where property and profit *prevent* prosperity for all. Its survival requires a wholesale attack on the working classes. The early history of this century, revived by today's events, proves that imperialism means severe depressions culminating in fascism and world wars as its sole method of self-preservation.

But there have been no major working class defeats in the leading industrial countries since those following World War II. For well over a decade the system has lurched from crisis to crisis without any resolution. As real profit rates declined, the rulers resorted to the creation of fictitious values to defend their power, borrowing from future investment to pay today's costs. Profits on the books were maintained at the cost of productive development, and even this could not hide the need of each capitalist enterprise and nation to wring ever more surplus-value out of labor. Fearful of the awakening giant, each national bourgeoisie tries to get its neighbor to crack down on its working class, thus starting the counterrevolutionary ball rolling. But the two murderous starts made so far (Indonesia in 1965, Chile in 1973) failed to spread, so capitalism's world crisis continues to build.

Reagan's solution is to saber-rattle incessantly about the Soviet threat in order to bind allied governments more closely to the U.S. His goal is to win public support both inside and outside the country for U.S. rearmament and military intervention in every corner of the globe. He hopes that force alone will enable the U.S. to suppress the wave of crises wherever they occur. His use of the airline tragedy to damn the Soviets was a particularly cynical illustration: there remains overwhelming suspicion that KAL flight 007 was being used to carry out some spy mission to test Soviet defenses. The Soviet rulers' cavalier destruction of innocent lives when they weren't certain of the military or civilian status of the trespassing plane was outrageous, but no more so than the hypocritical tears

shed by the power that A-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, sponsors counterrevolutionary terror in Central America and lobs "peacekeeping" shells into populated areas of Lebanon.

Reagan's strategy has succeeded only in part. Congress caved in after the airliner incident and authorized continued U.S. intervention in Lebanon and more funds for Salvadorean military butchers and the Nicaraguan *contras*. As well, a U.N. Security Council majority approved a U.S. resolution condemning the Soviets, and even "non-aligned" Zimbabwe and Nicaragua refused to vote against this blatant cold war move. But the peoples of the world, including public opinion in the U.S., have not swallowed their rulers' lines. As of this writing, the killing of over two hundred marines in Lebanon has raised serious questions among Americans over the U.S. role in that country. Washington's effort to enlist the Western working classes in its battle against supposed Russian pawns seems to be faltering.

Reagan's other major anti-crisis policy is economic: austerity in public spending and tax cuts for the wealthy, combined with massive rearmament, are supposed to have



*Poverty-stricken Brazilian workers have set off food riots in Rio. Imperialism now demands greater austerity from them.*

stimulated recovery. But they have opened up vast budget deficits and kept interest rates high. Despite all Reagan's boasts of success in stalling inflation, the present cyclical upturn is highly selective (unemployment is still at 10 percent) and will not last long. The fictitious capital balloon will shortly revive inflation again, and rising interest rates will push more poor countries to the wall. Forcing austerity on the workers in "Third World" countries in the interest of the banks is not Reagan's policy alone. Twice as many Democrats as Republicans in Congress voted for the recent bill to bail out the IMF and the banks.

The working classes of several "Third World" countries are currently leading the struggle against the imperialist system.



In every case, however, the frightened bourgeoisie (and the workers' middle-class reformist misleaders) are fighting to keep the struggle within safe capitalist — and therefore pro-imperialist — bounds.

In Argentina, the military regime was undermined by its military defeat in the Malvinas war last year. It is scheduled to surrender power to a newly elected civilian government, and the current uncertainty makes impossible any united bourgeois response to the IMF's insistence on debt payments for the banks and austerity for the workers. Even during the war, the regime made no move to seize the considerable property of its British enemy (or of Britain's ally, the U.S.).

In Brazil, crowds protesting austerity measures have rampaged against property since early September. A government journal has warned that actions of "hungry masses" could lead to a "restoration of authoritarianism" (*New York Times*, October 9); this from a military-dominated regime! The *Times* reporter noted that "spreading support for a debt moratorium is based largely on the fear of a social explosion." In the past year prices of staple foods (rice, beans, oil, sugar, milk) have risen 250 percent, as compared to average wage raises of 90 percent; that is, prices have effectively doubled. One state governor observed, "The suffering and need are reaching unacceptable levels. If the American people had this kind of capitalism on top of them, they would make another revolution." (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, October 16).

### Debt Crisis Oppresses Workers

In Chile, the tenth anniversary of the 1973 military coup has been greeted by a series of unprecedented mass demonstrations involving tens of thousands. A young union leader, Rodolfo Seguel, was catapulted into popularity when the government jailed him during a copper miners' strike. Seguel, a moderate Christian Democrat, is being groomed by the liberal bourgeoisie as Chile's "Lech Walesa" in the hope that he can help replace the Pinochet regime without a workers' uprising. The cause of the crisis is the soaring unemployment and inflation exacerbated by Pinochet's compliance with imperialism and the IMF.

In Central America, all the economies are so much in the grip of U.S. capital that the masses have been squeezed to the limit. No wonder revolt has swept the whole region; and it is likewise no wonder that the U.S. counterrevolutionary campaign is so solidly backed by the American bourgeoisie. Even those Democrats who fear that Reagan's overly military approach will lose have introduced their own economic-military package to hold on to U.S. control. They prefer to work with liberal Central American capitalists who they hope can corral rather than smash the mass upheaval. But the bipartisan war against Nicaraguan civilians shows that the U.S. bourgeoisie as a whole is unwilling to tolerate any examples of victorious mass revolts in this period of crisis, however capitulatory their leadership.

In the Philippines, the present wave of protests was triggered by the murder of dictator Marcos' leading liberal opponent, Benigno Aquino, at Manila Airport in August. Here too the international debt burden is severe, and the weakening of the Marcos regime has led to currency devaluation and payment crisis. The financial bourgeoisie is striving to take the leadership of the anti-Marcos struggle from the workers and the left-led guerrilla forces (that effort in fact is the reason why Aquino knowingly risked his life to return home from exile.) Because of the debt crisis the anti-Marcos bourgeoisie as well as the regime will inevitably move to impose austerity upon the workers.

The situation cries out for a united response by working-class people everywhere: force the cancellation of the imperialist debt! Capitalist classes have postponed their crises in the 1970's by going deeper into hock. Now they hope to escape by squeezing every ounce of blood out of the workers. The bitter discussions between national bankers and the IMF is only about how and how soon — not whether — to squeeze harder. And this applies not only to the oppressed workers of Latin America, Asia and Africa, but to the U.S. and Europe as well, where cities, local governments and even giant corporations are pleading bank-imposed poverty to slash benefits, wages and services; where bosses impose concessions and layoffs to buoy up dividends and interest payments; and where farmers and unemployed workers face evictions, unable to pay off mortgages.

### Bourgeois Debt Moratorium Doubtful

Marxists have always known that the working class, through its power to halt the production of profits, can bring capitalist exploitation to an end. This is not only the case in the imperialist countries. About sixty percent of the world foreign debt of 500 billion dollars is concentrated in Latin America. Brazil alone has a working class the size of any Western European country's (although it is a smaller percentage of the population); there are several factories with over 10,000 workers (30,000 in one Volkswagen plant), and a large fraction of the proletariat works in plants of over 500. A militant general strike by the Brazilian working class could force a repudiation of the imperialist debt and explode the entire capitalist network. No wonder the Brazilian financiers are quivering, as the IMF presses them to bell the proletarian cat.

Despite talk of a debt moratorium or a debtors' cartel in the bourgeois press, the capitalists on the paying end of the debt negotiations are hardly likely to try anything of the kind. Local and national bourgeoisies cannot survive independent of



*U.S. troops go ashore in recent Honduras exercises. Past maneuvers rehearsed Grenada; these menace Nicaragua.*

world markets and world finance. When they whimper about being unable to pay, they are only bargaining over time and rates. They are complaining about being forced to suppress their working classes with insufficient imperialist help. Even if there were a multi-nation attempt at a debt moratorium, the imperialist powers would either respond by force or bribe one or a few victims to break the cartel with loans and investment. A capitalist cartel depends on a monopoly of production and strength to succeed; it cannot win on the basis of common weakness.

Even when bourgeois spokesmen talk of repudiating or

delaying debt payments, the workers can have no confidence that such a thing could last for long. Debt renunciation is a defiance of capitalist principles and its imperialist enforcers. It will only happen when imposed by a fighting working class, either where the workers have seized state power (as with the Bolshevik revolution of 1917) or where the bourgeoisie feels the breath of proletarian revolution on its neck.

And even then, only workers' power can make the renunciation international, for only the working class can cut itself free of the national divisions that imperialism wields to keep the masses apart. Only the workers of different countries, not the competing capitalists, have the common interest in defying imperialism and letting capitalist finance collapse. If some nationalists do go along with debt repudiation for a moment, the ignition of similar actions elsewhere and the common struggle's profound world implications will soon separate them from the workers. Debt repudiation is anathema to all capitalists, even those caught in upheavals not immediately related to indebtedness. It smashes the entire network of imperialist relations.

Despite the vaunting promises of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists, the ex-colonial nations have universally failed to extricate themselves from the imperialist grip. For imperialism is not simply colonies, neo-colonies and armed invasions; it is the world system of capitalism. Only an in-



*Protests escalate in Manila streets. Flames ignited by masses will consume Marcos and his masters.*

ternational federation of workers' states can begin to break this hold.

Although we as Marxists openly proclaim that debt repudiation will succeed only through socialist revolution, we raise the call as a transitional demand on all existing workers' organizations. Our goal is to point the struggle at the common enemy and to prove that the burdens of all workers are the responsibility of capitalism as a whole, not individual circumstances. We wish to join with workers everywhere who feel the banks' heel on their backs but are not yet convinced that the abolition of capitalism is necessary to remove it. We believe that the common struggle will prove to them that they have no choice.

We salute the struggles of unemployed homeowners to defend their homes, of farmers against mortgage foreclosures, of industrial workers against contract concessions, of "Third World" peoples against the IMF's noose. They are all one struggle; every victory is a victory for all. But this objective

fact must be made conscious so that unity and then victory can be won.

As a transitional demand, debt repudiation has to be linked to other slogans and programs so that it does not become one local or national bourgeoisie's bargaining chip in dealing with the imperialist system. The working class must fight for the nationalization (expropriation) of major banks and industries. We call for their centralization under a central council of elected workers' representatives so that real planning and control can be exercised, and for a state monopoly of foreign trade. Otherwise, even under a workers' state in its early stages, the myriad international ties within the bourgeoisie could undercut a formal debt repudiation by allowing funds to escape abroad. Such programs require the active intervention of the advanced, Marxist layer of the working class to guide the workers' struggle.

Effective united action and socialist consciousness together require the building of an international Marxist party. This means genuine Marxism — in our day, genuine Trotskyism. Not the unabashedly pro-capitalist social democracy that bleats about "realistic" austerity programs. Not the nationalist Stalinist "communism" that defends the imperialist financial structure as tenaciously as do the dominant traditional bourgeoisies (look at Poland's repeated meek acquiescence to the bankers' demands in the teeth of proletarian revolt.) Not the sanctimonious guerrilla nationalism of those like the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, who attempt vainly to make their peace with the U.S., who grab the chance to repudiate aid to the Salvadorean rebels — but still, despite Reagan's undeclared war against them, refuse to repudiate Somoza's debt to U.S. banks! Not the Stalinist nationalism of Cuba's rulers, who offer to halt aid to Nicaragua in order to put in *their* claim for peace with the U.S. — while they too refuse to repudiate their debts to both Russia and the West European banks!

Where social democrats or Stalinists lead mass workers' organizations, they can be counted upon only to derail any serious anti-capitalist struggle. They above all, when forced to lead in order to catch up with the masses, will try to focus on national or individual banks and capitalists rather than the international system. There is no solution, no "socialism", in one or even a handful of countries. The most conscious workers are obliged to resolutely warn their fellows against the nationalist and petty-bourgeois danger and fight to win working-class leadership. Internationalism is the essence of proletarian politics, the reason above all for a world revolutionary party.

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# Planning & the Law of Value in the USSR

How can the degeneration of the Russian revolution, together with the creation of new Stalinist states modeled on the USSR after World War II, be understood from the Marxist point of view? This is the so-called "Russian question," and it has been debated almost from the date of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. It is of far more than mere theoretical interest, for the Stalinist counterrevolution has aborted, so far, the world revolution and polluted the very meaning of communism.

The most revealing light on the development of Stalinism was cast by Leon Trotsky in the late 1920's and 1930's. Trotsky characterized Stalin's Russia as a "degenerated workers' state," a revolutionary proletarian state that had started off on the road of transition to the classless, stateless society of communism — but, under the pressure of economic backwardness, international isolation, and the growth of an internal ruling bureaucracy, had turned back toward the restoration of capitalist relations. After Trotsky's murder by

continue Trotsky's once-correct formula — for almost half a century beyond the point where the Soviet state stopped defending the fundamental proletarian achievements of the 1917 revolution, and it tries to apply it to the new Stalinist states built on nationalized property after the war. Recognizing the structural identity of the new Stalinist states with the USSR, Pablo declared that they were "deformed workers' states." The deformity was undeniable, but the appellation "workers" flew in the face of the fact that they had been created through the Stalinists' forcible defeat of workers' struggles. Pabloism since then has always meant capitulation to Stalinism or other petty-bourgeois currents in the working class. (Today its leading theorist is Ernest Mandel; our comprehensive attack on Mandel's views is in *Socialist Voice* No. 2.)

The WP-IWG analysis attempts to avoid the traditional perils of Pabloism by openly acknowledging the totally anti-working class and counterrevolutionary character of the

*Shopping queues in Moscow are everyday occurrences. No matter how much the plan calls for more consumer goods as opposed to capital goods, the reverse results. Marx knew this was a function of the law of value; for Pabloites it is only a remarkable coincidence.*



Stalin in 1940 and the momentous events of World War II, the Trotskyist movement (the Fourth International) spawned several different positions on the Russian question. Like those theories formed in opposition to Trotsky's during the 1930's, none of these was able to give revolutionary guidance to the working class struggles of the post-war years. For this reason, the League for the Revolutionary Party has devoted much space in *Socialist Voice* to our theory of "statified capitalism," and we have done so especially through polemics against the alternative, fundamentally anti-Marxist answers to the Russian question.

This article is devoted to a critique of a new entry in the debate, a booklet called *The Degenerated Revolution: The Origins and Nature of the Stalinist States* published in late 1982 by the Workers Power organization of Britain and the Irish Workers Group (henceforward jointly abbreviated as WP-IWG). This work claims to develop Trotsky's analysis, holding that all the Stalinist countries have bureaucratically distorted workers' states. In this it adheres to the theory we refer to as Pabloism, originated by Michel Pablo, the post-war head of the Fourth International. Pabloism has pretended to

Stalinist takeovers. It terms the post-war Stalinist states "degenerate" rather than "deformed," and it directly criticizes analyses made by Pablo, Mandel and others. As well, it disputes the alternative idea that the Stalinist system is capitalist by taking on the most prominent state capitalist theory of today, that expounded by Tony Cliff of the British Socialist Workers Party. (Our fundamental disagreement with the Cliff theory has been explained in *Socialist Voice* Nos. 1, 5 and 16.)

Even after so many decades, the more serious Pabloites are forced to admit the continued existence of basic problems with their theory. Each new contribution reads like a new rationalization and creates more problems than it answers. The present book is no exception, and like so many "new" theories it turns out underneath to be a very old one in modern dress. In attempting to improve on the previous Pabloites, the book only succeeds in making explicit some of the anti-Marxist assumptions that Pabloism has always depended on. Despite its claims, it is unable to present a clear account of the critical 1944-1948 period in Eastern Europe, when the Stalinists first made their counterrevolutionary revolutions. In turning to

Trotsky and the early Comintern for assistance in understanding these events, it thoroughly misunderstands and misrepresents the revolutionary point of view that they stood for. And in the final analysis, these errors rest on incomprehension of the Marxist theory of the workers' state on the one hand and of capitalism on the other. (The WP-IWG booklet takes up the Stalinist-led revolutions in Cuba, China, etc. as well as Eastern Europe. But since the chief theoretical questions are the same in all cases, for the sake of conciseness we will generally limit our discussion to Eastern Europe and, of course, the USSR.)

### Is Stalinist Planning Progressive?

All Pabloite explanations have to deal with immense contradictions on fundamental political questions: What is the ruling class when the Stalinists seize power? Is Stalinism revolutionary or counterrevolutionary, or a perpetual combination of both? In attempting to answer, they have been forced to spawn whole new theories of political economy that stand both Marx and the real world on their respective heads. Before tackling the chief political conclusions of the WP-IWG version we will explore its economic rationale.

Each Pabloite has to find something essential in the Stalinist states that serves to characterize them as progressive. Like the legendary blind men encountering an elephant, the various Pabloites have their favorite parts of the Russian bear's anatomy. Most seem to think that the key criterion is nationalized property; some prefer the *intent* of the rulers to nationalize property; others point to the ouster of the old bourgeoisie whether or not property is nationalized. The WP-IWG has felt around and come up with "central planning."

"The monopoly of foreign trade, and most vitally the introduction of planning on the basis of the suppression of the law of value, as well as nationalizations, are the features which, taken together, define an economy as post-capitalist." (page 99)

"The *qualitative* transformation of these bureaucratized states into a bureaucratically degenerate form of the dictatorship of the proletariat takes place at that point when the regimes have expropriated the bourgeoisie economically and set out to subordinate and curtail the operation of the essential law of the capitalist economy — the law of value — and organize their nationalized economies on the basis of the planning principle — albeit in a bureaucratically deformed manner." (page 46)

We will take up the law of value shortly, since it is evident that the WP-IWG considers it to be counterposed to the principle of planning. But first we deal with the implications of the Pabloite criteria themselves.

Planning, or the "total planification" of the economy as the booklet puts it, can be an elusive concept. The WP-IWG dates the creation of degenerate workers' states in Eastern Europe to the introduction of the first Five Year Plans in the period from 1948 to 1951. But why count only the Five Year Plans? There were shorter-term plans starting in 1947. Also, the Five Year Plans, modeled after the Stalinist plans for the USSR in the period that began in 1928, consisted typically of general growth figures anticipated for each industry. They were not the binding contracts specifying which plant produces how much of what for whom that characterized the one-year and quarterly plans and that differentiate Stalinist planning from western "indicative" planning.

Moreover, once the Five Year Plans were under way, the planned targets were typically not met. Nor could they be. Heavy industry was always favored by the economic ad-

ministrators, sometimes even ahead of planned increases, and consumer goods universally fell behind the plans. Stalinist statistics are often unreliable and incomplete, but it is apparent that working-class living standards fell throughout Eastern Europe during the first Five Year Plan periods. It is a remarkable theory that defines workers' states by the existence of planning that attacks the living conditions of the workers! Curiously, the WP-IWG booklet hardly discusses the specifics of the Eastern European plans at all; there are only a few brief paragraphs in all of 100 pages. Yet the establishment of these plans is the fulcrum on which the entire argument turns. (There is a more extensive discussion of the earlier Soviet plans — but for the WP-IWG, *these* plans had nothing special to do with determining the class nature of the Soviet state.)

Another remarkable fact: the various countries' Five Year Plans were introduced almost simultaneously, all copied from the USSR's and all under the direction of Moscow. Yet they were in no way internationally coordinated, except insofar as Russian needs determined the production and trade plans of each of its satellites. The Stalinists' planning was (and still is) so uncoordinated from country to country that the prices at which goods are traded have to be set by a formula depending only on Western capitalism's world market prices — not on the internal production conditions of the Stalinist countries themselves. It is almost as if the Stalinists deliberately set out to remove every hint of Marxism, every last ounce of economic science, from their plans.

That is indeed the case. "Planning" in Eastern Europe demonstrated not any progressive working-class character of Stalinism but its reactionary capitalist character. International economic relations were bilateral between Russia and each smaller country. Economic ties directly between the



*Hungarian planners at Karl Marx University (!) join NYU business professors in management game project. They learn how to compete against each other for capital funds, how to run labor negotiations, how to determine profit sharing. The Pabloite belief that such planning makes Stalinism proletarian proves that idiocy isn't only rural.*

satellites (let alone the subversive idea of a Balkan federation) were prevented. The new plans transformed Soviet control from haphazard looting to a more systematic extraction. This contributed to the Yugoslav breakaway and the workers' uprisings of the 1950's.

As well, each national plan was a minor-league version of the Russian plan in that it attempted to build up a self-sufficient national economy rather than a segment of a coherent "socialist" international economy. In sum, Stalinist planning was aimed to satisfy Russian nationalist imperialism first, and utopian national autarky second. Like all capitalism



in this epoch, Stalinism functions to maintain great-nation imperialism and the nation-state itself as reactionary barriers to the necessary internationalism.

### Planning vs. Law of Value

The WP-IWG definition of a "post-capitalist" economy makes clear that the crucial underlying assumption is that planning and the law of value are counterposed. The law of value is the "essential law of the capitalist economy" and planning is said to "suppress" it or curtail its operation. The subordination of the law of value is not brought out simply to argue against theories like ours that there are capitalist relations under Stalinism. It is the very heart of the Pabloite conception of the Stalinist states. Yet for all that, there is remarkably little discussion of the law of value in the WP-IWG booklet, and nothing concrete about the relation or counterposition of the law of value and planning in the USSR or Eastern Europe. The assumption that the law of value and planning are incompatible, each characteristic of totally separate and distinct societies, is taken to be so obvious that it goes without saying — and so nothing is said of it. But this simple and obvious assumption is simply wrong.

The booklet *does* distinguish between genuine workers' planning and Stalinist planning. The first kind is the route to socialism; Stalinist planning is quite the opposite. It "increases inequality and fosters disproportionality in the economy." It is "necessarily crude and blind." "It cannot achieve sustained *qualitative* growth in the economy" (page 20). In sum, "the transition to socialism is blocked" (page 31). But it still is good enough to be labelled planning: "Whether the economy is planned or not depends on whether the fundamental laws of capitalist production have been subordinated as the principal laws governing production by a system of rules emanating from the centralized decision-making apparatus of the USSR" (page 20).

### Capitalism Means Inequality

The whole argument comes down to the claim that the law of value has been suppressed by Stalinism, so that presumably any type of "planning" is superior. What then is the law of value? The booklet gives an adequate initial description. "All goods are produced for the market. On the market they are exchanged, in the last analysis, on the basis of the amount of socially necessary labor contained in each commodity." In addition, under capitalism "both the prerequisites for production, including labor power, and the products themselves take the form of commodities" (page 26).

So far so good. But for Marxists, no aspect of capitalism is unchanging. Even the law of value alters its form as society develops. It initially appears as a principle of equality: goods containing equivalent amounts of labor are exchanged for one another. In pre-capitalist simple commodity production that is all there is to it. But under capitalism, both labor power and capital itself become commodities; different capitals exploit different amounts of labor and thereby extract different rates of profit. The law of value then demands that capitals receive equal returns for equal outlays (Marx called this "capitalist communism"). This process is enforced through competition: capital is bought and sold, and it flows to the sectors of industry with the highest return for capital invested, i.e., the highest rate of profit. Thus profit controls the economy; profit, not social need or individual desires, determines what is to be produced, how much, by whom, and so forth.

The law of value thus regulates the economy of capitalism blindly, behind the backs of the capitalists. This fact (although not the development leading to it) is noted in the

WP-IWG booklet. Indeed, it is central to their case, for such capitalist anarchy of production is what is chiefly contrasted to the "centralized decision-making" of even Stalinist planning.

Yet there are more changes in the law of value. Once labor power and capital become commodities, the ownership of capital dominates the mere possession of labor power: dead labor dominates living. As the class separation between bourgeoisie and proletariat evolved and expanded, the law of value evolved from a principle of equality to the embodiment of inequality, vastly unequal rights and gross differences in income. As Marx put it in *Capital* (Vol. I, page 583):

"... the laws of appropriation or of private property, laws that are based on the production and circulation of commodities, become by their own inner and inexorable dialectic changed into their very opposite. The exchange of equivalents, the original operation with which we started, has now become turned around in such a way that there is only an apparent exchange."

This development of the law of value — from equality to inequality, from equal exchange to appropriation without any equivalent — is by necessity overlooked in the WP-IWG booklet.

Inequality develops within the bourgeoisie as well. "Capitalist communism" is already a law of inequality, for the sharing of surplus-value involved means that the strong "share" the value obtained by the weaker capitalists. But this is not all. As the system develops and each capital is forced to accumulate, capital concentrates and centralizes. One capital devours many, wrote Marx; the strong eliminate the weak. And as capitalism moves into its epoch of decay (characterized by imperialism and monopoly), the proportionate sharing of capitalist communism turns disproportionate. The strong find additional ways to expand their shares of value. State power is controlled by some and not others; fictitious capital not based upon actual embodied labor demands its share of profits too. Production and distribution of value are governed not just by the market but also by state regulation, monopoly and cartel restrictions and planning, and the depredations of imperialism. Already in 1891 Engels had noted that "Not only private production but also lack of planning disappear when we proceed from joint-stock companies to trusts which control and monopolize whole branches of industry." Lenin later observed that planning and the socialization of production become characteristic of capitalism in its epoch of imperialist decay.

The WP-IWG booklet sees none of this. It notes the tendency toward monopolization of capital only to insist that "even the greatest monopoly is itself dominated by the law of value in that its products are destined for the market" (page 26). This is misleading: the law of value dominates, but not only because of the market (where *not* all products are destined), and certainly not because of the equal exchange that insistence on the market implies. The market has eroded as equal exchange has turned toward its opposite. Imperialism means unequal appropriation by its very nature; it is no longer the "free" market-dominated system that bourgeois theorists worship. The bourgeois, Stalinist and Pabloite conception that capitalism means the free market leads logically to the (reformist and Stalinist) view that imperialism is a nasty *surface* policy of capitalism rather than, as for Lenin, the essence of capitalism in this epoch.

### Value in the Workers' State

As opposed to pseudo-Marxist formalists who erect a static definitional idea of a workers' state as a pure form, Marxists examine its dynamics: how it develops and changes, where it is

going. This side of the question is absolutely decisive, and is thoroughly misunderstood by every variety of Pabloite.

Marx summed it up succinctly in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*:

**“Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”**

The workers' state rules the society transitional to communism, the classless society whose economic banner is “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” Just as the need for a state cannot be done away with immediately, so that a workers' state is required to govern the transition, the economic relations cannot be transformed overnight either.

Under communism, production and distribution of goods are planned, consciously decided upon and carried out by the associated workers. In particular, the labor (both duration

USSR at breakneck speed. It collectivized the peasantry by force, and used the strongest capitalist methods available for capital accumulation: it widened inequalities rather than narrowing them and stripped the workers of the rights gained since 1917 so that they were helpless against the domination of managers and bureaucrats. When the civil war against the peasants led to famines, the result was that “1933 was the culmination of the most precipitous peacetime decline in living standards known in recorded history” (Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR*, page 207). In effect, the bureaucracy enforced the law of value — of exploitation and inequality — against the working class.

Stalin's super-industrialization drive in the early 1930's was highly contradictory. It made essential use of centralized state and economic power to concentrate national resources on selected heavy industrial projects, and thus it could only have been accomplished in a workers' state. The old bourgeoisie could never have achieved the centralized command over the economy sufficient to use its resources for mammoth



*This cartoon appeared in the Russian satyric magazine Krokodil with the caption: “So finally the friends met. For months either one or the other was absent.” The Stalinists are forced to recognize the rampant inefficiency of their system of “planned anarchy.” They blame the workers. Pabloites hide the regressive essence of Stalinist production but they too identify the monstrosity with the working class.*

and quality) needed for each product is regulated directly, without the intermediary of the money form of value — that is, without a market. Under the transitional workers' state, all of this has to be gradually accomplished. The development of the productive forces, the subordination of the law of value to planning, and the suppression of inequality both within and between classes, take place only over time.

At the start of a workers' state, and in particular, at the beginning of the USSR with its backwardness and isolation, the law of value yields only the slightest bit to state planning and proletarian consciousness. That is why the Bolsheviks had to adopt the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the twenties, encouraging private commercial trading, markets and small bourgeois production. The state apparatus, the workers' state, did what it could to protect the workers against the worst effects and inequalities of the law of value, but it was value and not planning that dominated the economy. And it was not long before the growing bureaucratism of the state apparatus undermined this protective role.

The bureaucracy at first set its sights on stabilizing social relations rather than revolutionizing them. In the 1920's it coddled the richer peasantry and NEP bourgeoisie. But feeling threatened by the bourgeoisie's economic power and the possibility of its allying with imperialism, the Stalinist nationalists moved in 1928 to destroy the independent bourgeois peasantry and NEPmen and to industrialize the

development. Stalinism did, but the surplus-value required was sweated out of the workers and peasants at intensified rates. That masses of living labor were enslaved to the creation of dead labor through whip and gun proves that the law of value had the Soviet workers' state by the throat. All the talk about the Stalinist economy being based on “centralized planning, not the working of the law of value” is utter nonsense. It was a unique, unstable combination of centralization and the law of value. The combination did not last.

But whether it was planning in any scientific sense suitable for the transition to socialism is another matter. The economy was in chaos. Disproportions were rampant (factories and their raw materials each lacking the other), inflation skyrocketed through 1933, and in that year there was a precipitous and unplanned decline in investments. Trotsky commented in April 1933: “The Soviet economy today is neither a monetary nor a planned one. It is an almost purely bureaucratic economy.” He called for a retreat from adventurist expansion and a “year of capital reconstruction” to replace the Five Year Plan with a return to the market, in the hope of later regaining the possibility of scientific planning in coordination with use of market relations for economic accounting. (See *The Soviet Economy in Danger*, October 22, 1932.)

Trotsky understood that capitalist categories still existed in the USSR, unlike his self-proclaimed disciples among the



Pabloites. (There are problems in Trotsky's understanding of economic questions, but this is not one of them.) His writings and those of the Left Opposition often refer to surplus-value, commodities and capital accumulation. Trotsky called for a market and a monetary regulator not because he wanted a return to capitalism but because reality had to be recognized if the economic crisis was to be overcome. Accurate measurement of labor time and resources was crucial. Stalinist claims that "we Bolsheviks are bound by no objective law" were a fantasy, triply so for a society so backward economically as Russia's.

The WP-IWG booklet cites some comments by Trotsky on the crisis of Stalinism for two purposes: to demonstrate, correctly, that Trotsky predicted the crisis and to criticize the Left Opposition for overreacting to it. "Reality was, however, to show these perspectives to be too starkly drawn" (page 23). Their argument is that the economy stabilized in the mid-1930's, then went into crisis again and even survived into "the relatively stable mid-1950's." How can this represent a collapse of planning and the operation of the law of value? The Stalinist methods of stabilization and the violent counterrevolutionary events to follow showed precisely how this was possible.

### The Stalinist Economy

The Stalinist rulers recognized the crisis but had to find other solutions than Trotsky's, for his methods would have required restoration of workers' rights, soviets, trade unions, and internal party democracy. Instead, they deepened their centralized political control; Stalin smashed not only his opponents but even his semi-independent allies. But to meet the economic crisis they initiated a sharp turn to a policy of bureaucratic competition and economic *decentralization*. Wage differentials were sharply widened and consumer goods rationing was ended, creating privileged layers within the working class (a process accelerated by the cultivation of Stakhanovism, or norm-busting by "star" workers). In agriculture, collectivization remained but collective farmers were granted private plots and a free market for their output; by the mid-1930's this private economy owned the majority of Soviet livestock and produced the bulk of all but grain and industrial crops.

The planning mechanism was varied frequently during the 1930's, but the system finally settled on was centralized more geographically than economically. The ruling CP tried innumerable methods for bringing industry under central control, which shows not that any such attempts succeeded but rather that no method worked. The centrifugal forces always won out.

The mid-1930's revisions of theory and practice stabilized the Soviet economy and have survived to the present day unchanged in their essentials. Each enterprise receives its plan from its ministry in Moscow, but coordination among the several dozen industrial ministries is minimal. Even in the planners' own theory, the economy is centrally administered rather than planned, and even this degree of centralization is mythical. For competitive bargaining over the plans has become an institution (within which deliberate over- and under-estimation of costs and supplies is rampant), hoarding of labor and supplies leads to vast waste and shortages (simultaneously!), and production for self-supply by factories is notoriously necessary. A "second economy" (black market) of illegal private production flourishes, along with a "third economy" organized by "expeditors" making deals between factories. Without these relationships that exist totally outside the formal plan, Stalinist industry could not function. (Detailed descriptions appear in many sources; one good

summary can be found in the book by Zaleski, *Stalinist Planning for Economic Growth*, pages 482-512.)

These revisions were incorporated as well into the legal system; private farming and enterprise profit accounting are even enshrined in the new Soviet constitution. Enterprises became legal personalities, and the successes of each firm and ministry are directly tied to the rewards of its managers and officials. The Soviet economy established by Stalin operates through decentralized planning and incentives under the form of state ownership and incentives. And this, of course, is the system adopted by the Eastern European and other neo-Stalinist economies.

The WP-IWG book argues that "the accumulation of the means of production in the Soviet Union in no way squares with (Marx's) definition of capital" as accumulated dead labor consisting of commodities. "Neither the factories, mines, power stations and machinery nor the products made with them were commodities, they were not produced for eventual sale on the market" (page 25). The red herring here is "the market," for the vast majority of these things *are* produced for sale in the USSR, by one firm for another. (Those that are produced by a factory for itself are goods that the plan has failed to produce; they represent an even higher level of anarchy.) The different Soviet enterprises are of course state-owned, but that does not mean they are not independent. They operate under separate financial accounting, sign contracts with each other, take each other to court over them, compete with each other for labor. The "planned sale" of many Soviet goods represents not the absence of commodity production but rather the prevalence of shortages, the way rationing does. No, Soviet production goods, like consumer goods, are produced for sale, for money — but on a market that is severely controlled, not "free."

In denying that goods in the Soviet Union are commodities bearing value, the WP-IWG thinks it is simply denying that the society is capitalist. But in effect it is also denying that Stalinist Russia could have been a workers' state, in whose early stages producers' goods would also have to be commodities. In this respect the WP-IWG theory bears a close resemblance to Max Shachtman's old theory of bureaucratic collectivism — a "third camp" society neither capitalist nor proletarian. There is much more evidence of this resemblance to come.

### Trotsky on the Workers' State

The WP-IWG booklet also describes the Stalinist system as one that "cannot achieve sustained *qualitative* growth in the economy" (page 20). It is "incapable of outstripping the highest economic and technical achievements of capitalism" (page 92). This is due, moreover to the "intrinsic contradictions" in the Stalinist economies. Yet it still adds up to a workers' state.

Trotsky saw the situation differently. For him the continued recognition of the USSR as a workers' state was based upon its capacity to expand the productive forces and thereby lay the groundwork for socialism:

"Despite monstrous bureaucratic degeneration, the Soviet state still remains the historical instrument of the working class insofar as it assures the development of economy and culture on the basis of nationalized means of production and, by virtue of this, prepares the conditions for a genuine emancipation of the toilers through the liquidation of the bureaucracy and of social inequality" (in *The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism*, 1935).

For Trotsky, nationalization of the economy was a gigantic

gain for the working class since it permitted centralization and thereby the growth necessary for escaping backwardness, anarchy and all the evils spawned by capitalism. We share this perspective. But we draw from it a further conclusion that Trotsky did not see (and that the Pabloites cannot see, for they fetishize nationalization as a form independent of social content). Namely, the decentralized economic and legal structures that Stalin established in the mid-1930's made centralized direction and expansion impossible. There have been and there will be no further industrial build-ups like that of the early 1930's, accomplished in the face of world capitalist depression, no matter how brutal and bloody the weapons the Stalinists use. No more will Stalinist methods create an industrial giant out of backwardness. For only a workers' state can do it, and the Soviet Union is no longer a workers' state. It is no accident that the newer Stalinist states' industrial advances, after enormous efforts, have collapsed, placing their economies not ahead of the Western capitalists' but in their pockets.

### The USSR as Capitalist

Capitalism was ultimately restored in the USSR through the mass purge of the late 1930's, which wiped out hundreds of thousands (at least) of advanced workers and party officials. The party was totally transformed: in various leadership categories, 70 to 90 percent of those who held office in the mid-1930's were killed, imprisoned or simply removed. Significantly, almost the entire layer of "red directors," the communists who had managed industry from the 1920's on was eradicated, to be replaced by the new "intelligentsia" — the Brezhnev-Kosygin-Andropov generation of the party — trained under Stalin and dedicated to the rule of the bureaucracy at any cost to the masses. As well, the critical armed power of the state — the military forces and the secret police — saw their general staffs shattered and replaced. The purges cemented the structures and social relations established in the immediately preceding years and forged a new bureaucracy to rule them. This produced the bureaucratic capitalist class and stultified capitalist system that defines Stalinism today.

The massive attack on party members and the workers reflected in the Moscow purge trials was called a "preventive civil war" by Trotsky. He regarded it as a sign of the weakness and imminent break-up of the Stalinist regime. But the regime's consolidation in World War II shows that the purges had represented not weakness but the strength the Stalinists felt as a stabilized class to be able to erase the last vestiges of workers' power in the state, party and army. Wrong on the motive, Trotsky was one of the few observers to see the depth and significance of the purges. With historical hindsight and the tools of Marxism, today we can demonstrate the transformation from the proletarian state to a restored capitalist state. In contrast, the transformation of capitalist states into "workers' states" in Eastern Europe in the 1940's without the shattering of the previous state, without civil war, without class struggle — except to the extent that the workers fought *against* the Stalinists' confiscation of their gains — can be seen only by social alchemists: reformists and centrists.

The formal culmination of the counterrevolution came at the party congress of March 1939, which sanctified the new social relations and dedicated itself to the new "intelligentsia" as, in effect, the ruling class. Our analysis that the USSR was now capitalist has been completely confirmed by subsequent events, for the development of the USSR and its postwar copies has adhered to Marx's description of the laws governing capitalism. Thus the USSR has been imperialist since World

War II. It set up openly exploitative relations with its satellites: joint-stock companies at local expense for Soviet profit, unequal trade relations, and vast war reparations. After the Eastern European workers' revolts of the 1950's the terms of exploitation were relaxed, but the satellite economies remain tied to Russian needs, and the ties are militarily enforced.

As well, as we have pointed out often before, the rate of accumulation in the USSR (and all Stalinist countries) has steadily declined (see the figures in *Socialist Voice* No. 4, page 22). This reflects the tendency for the capitalist rate of profit to decline. The WP-IWG believes that Stalinist growth rates slow down "periodically" (page 20), but the facts show a long-term decline whose lowest levels are being reached today. Poland's crisis is only the worst of many. Typically, the Five Year Plans anticipate the decline, and the yearly results carry it out even further than planned.

Related to this is the perennial domination of Department I (producers' goods) over Department II (consumption goods), as would be expected in a capitalist economy by Marxist theory. This occurs despite the bureaucrats' continual promises and occasional efforts to increase production of consumer goods. These attempts inevitably show up in the plans but not in the results. Again, the lawful consequences of the law of value are working behind the backs of the bureaucrats, plan though they may.

Marx observed in his famous letter to his friend Kugelmann that practice was the only way to "prove" the operation of the law of value; nothing else could foresee the actual course of capitalist economy. Using this law we have been able for years to predict the decline of Soviet accumulation, when Stalinists, Pabloites and Shachtmanites of all stripes have been pointing to its "strength." The WP-IWG insistence on Stalinism's "periodic" slowdowns, rather than the decline that even the Russians now admit, is a necessary consequence of their assumption that Stalinism's problems cannot be lawfully explained.

Interestingly, the Stalinist officials who are forced to wrestle with the reality of their system and its failures to respond to "centralized planning" have had to become aware of the law of value operating in their economies. During the 1930's, the cost to anyone acknowledging it or suggesting its use would have been arrest, but its recognition has since become more and more open. The law of value was officially affirmed by an official 1943 pronouncement, and then was established in the Stalinist pantheon by Stalin himself in 1952 (see *Socialist Voice* No. 2, page 29). In the freer, post-Stalin discussions among Soviet economists, the law of value has been widely accepted (see Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates*, page 171 and afterwards).

### Conundrum for Planning Theorists

This raises difficult theoretical problems for those who believe that planning, not blind law, regulates the Soviet-type economies. If the planners plan according to the law of value, as they themselves think they do, how can it be said that planning and not the law of value is dominant? Moreover, the Pabloites typically blame all problems on the parasitic bureaucracy. Thus the WP-IWG book insists, "In the USSR it is not the property relations but a layer of administrators and distributors who block the development of the productive forces" (page 30). But evidently the bureaucracy needs and desires growth and has been campaigning for it for over half a century, if only to keep abreast of its capitalist rivals. So the bureaucracy's status as an inherent obstacle is something that operates blindly, lawfully in Marx's sense, behind its own



back. What kind of mysterious "force" does this, other than the law of value? What are the laws of motion of Stalinism if they are not those of decaying capitalism? The question has not been addressed, let alone answered.

Stalinist states have existed for over forty years since Trotsky wrote. With all this rich experience one would expect some Pabloite attempts to analyze the lawful dynamics of Stalinism so that prediction would become possible. There have been none. The vacuum is testimony to the fact that Pabloite theories are rationalizations rather than science.

### The Law of Value under Stalinism

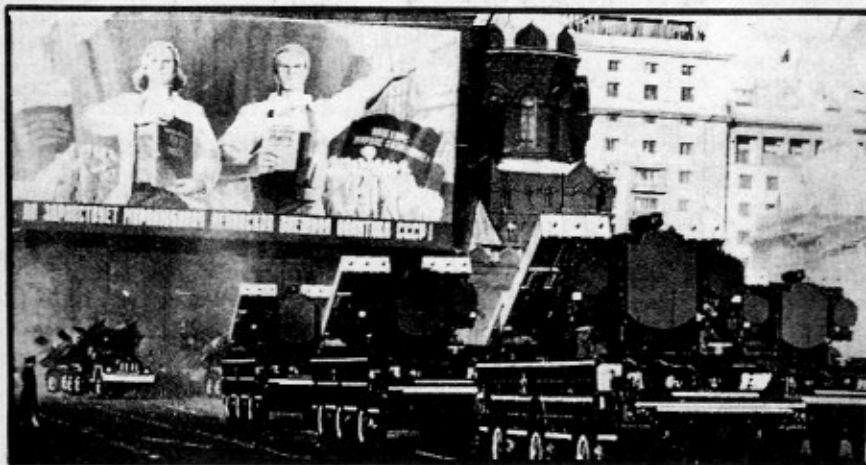
The law of value operates under Stalinism in a severely distorted form, distorted even more than under Western state monopoly capitalism in this imperialist epoch. (And, as we have shown, even the distortions are a function of the law, which operates through contradiction itself.) As a result, for example, most prices of legally traded goods are set centrally and with a good deal of arbitrariness, thus making an accurate measure of value impossible. Reformers are trying to change this in several countries, with least success in the USSR, the most bureaucratic of all. Yugoslavia and Hungary, the furthest Stalinist countries along this road, exhibit little of the "planning" that defines Pabloite "workers' states."

An especially significant distortion is that factory managers are generally unable to make use of the traditional capitalist tool of mass layoffs. Planners and managers openly voice their complaints to Western reporters about their need to fire workers; various Stalinist governments have already experimented with allowing them to do so. But the Soviet model of capitalism restored after a defeated socialist revolution is still weakened by the deformed remnants of revolutionary

petition between firms, as Marx noted, is merely the surface reflection of this drive. But with internal competition channeled through the state bureaucracy, the strongest pressure for accumulation is felt at the top of the Stalinist hierarchy and by the officials who manage foreign relations, both economic and military. Given the conservatism of local bureaucrats and managers (necessitated by the system's "planning" by repetition of what was done last year), this pressure has been traditionally relieved by accumulating capital through new construction rather than plant modernization — "extensively" rather than "intensively." But new resources and especially new supplies of labor are running out, so intensive accumulation is necessary and as difficult as ever. That is why Stalinism's crisis has been so forceful in recent years (see *Socialist Voice* No. 19, pages 24-26).

As capitalism decays, its surface manifestations change drastically. In the economic sphere, the imperialist epoch has produced permanent state intervention and massive fictitious capital to distort the appearance of the law of value throughout the world system. Stalinism is a major prop for the system and, for all its mutations, merely an aspect of it. State monopoly capitalism is capitalism's way of surviving in an epoch where socialization is a necessity. Stock companies, monopolies, cartels, trusts, statification and multinational corporations are all harbingers of the future socialist society in that they are socialized in form. To concentrate on the socialized forms rather than their capitalist content would be a monstrous error, one that Kautsky made in order to argue that capitalism was becoming progressive. There is no need to repeat this error by glorifying the forms of Stalinism.

At the same time, it has to be noted that the very forms that preserve capitalism also intensify its decay. Stalinist



*Soviet military power is strong compared to faltering economy. But both Russians and Reaganites exaggerate its technological development.*

workers' gains. To get rid of full employment would risk upheaval, just as would any attempt in the U.S. to ban democratic rights and trade unions. Therefore, the USSR's rulers must do without the reserve army of the unemployed so vital for traditional capitalism in restraining and disciplining the working class. The Stalinists, like the German Nazis, rely on police measures rather than economic ones as their chief weapon for mass discipline. But the police state is a poor economic tool. Today the necessity of maintaining full employment leads to Stalinist enterprises being typically over-manned and labor productivity notoriously low. Together with the lack of direct market competition between enterprises, this means that pressure on individual firms to accumulate through modernization, by acquiring more dead labor to replace living workers, is deflected.

The defining capitalist drive to accumulate is generated by the class struggle between capitalists and workers. Com-

capitalism, additionally distorted by its appropriation of proletarian forms, finds that the accumulated distortions play havoc with the accurate operation of the law of value. This must be stopped if bureaucratic "planning" is to function at all. Hence the pressure on the rulers to eliminate the proletarian forms and regain unemployment and internal competition. As well, its weaknesses make it all the more dependent on the West for finance and technology, and this accelerates the trend toward restoration of more traditional forms. Ironically, the planning form itself weakens in the quest for a turnaround. But as in the West, the forms reflecting the contradictory capitalist drives toward socialization cannot be eliminated. "Planning," even in the grossly distorted forms it takes under capitalism, East and West, is still a necessity for the world's rulers.

There is no doubt that Stalinism impedes the operations of the law of value. So does a workers' state. But one cannot

conclude from this (it would be a fallacious syllogism, to put it formally) that Stalinism must therefore be some sort of workers' state. To do so would be an error not only of formal logic but of Marxism. A workers' state attenuates the operation of the law of value in the interest of the workers, in the direction of communism. Stalinism distorts it to enable capitalism to survive, but its contradictions remain a barrier to advancing the productive forces. It is the same with traditional imperialist capitalism. And it is nothing very new, for it is just Marx's analysis that the contradictions of capitalism would bring about its overthrow. In sum, a workers' state impedes the law of value consciously, in order to advance social progress. Stalinism impedes it blindly but lawfully, and with the opposite result. Statified capitalism only intensifies imperialist capitalism's laws of decay.

The only specific arguments that the WP-IWG raises against the law of value under Stalinism come in a critique of the theory of "bureaucratic state capitalism" of Tony Cliff — who shares their view that the law of value is foreign to the USSR because labor power is not a commodity under



Russian workers storming Winter Palace in 1917. Marxists knew workers' states came from workers. Today phony Marxists believe workers' states can come from planning. Result: planless planning and workerless workers' states

Stalinism. The book does not bring out this common position; instead it disputes Cliff's alternative that the law of value is introduced by military competition with the West, forcing Russia to accumulate use-values.

In asserting against Cliff that "there is, effectively, no competition between 'USSR Ltd.' and other capital blocks on the world market" (without giving any evidence, we might add; page 26), the WP-IWG ignores the Soviet bloc's economic weakness in relation to the West and Japan. Low labor productivity under Stalinism means that every product imported is paid for in goods embodying more labor, more value, than it contains. This is always the problem for backward economies trading capitalistically with more advanced ones; it is part of the way imperialism exploits the world. Yet importing is the only strategy the Stalinists have for increasing

productivity. The law of value has them in a bind — and they recognize this, even if the Pabloites don't.

It must also be pointed out that the Cliff-WP-IWG view that labor power is not a commodity in the USSR means that the Soviet producers are not really proletarians but rather slaves or some other form of exploited toilers. Of course, neither Cliff nor the WP-IWG realize this, but the point was understood by the first developer of the theory to which Cliff and the WP-IWG have merely contributed refinements. Max Shachtman did originally describe the Soviet class relation as a type of slavery. It was only in the 1950's, when the workers of the Stalinist countries demonstrated in struggle all the attributes of a genuine working class, that Shachtman interred his slavery analysis without comment. His descendants, many of whom think that their theories are describing not Shachtman's bureaucratic collectivism but a form of either capitalism or a workers' state, have in practice joined him in affirming the existence of a working class in words while denying it in theory.

### Workers' State or Socialism?

The conception that planning and the law of value are incompatible rests on a corrupted version of Marx's theory of the workers' state.

Marx's definition of the proletarian dictatorship as the society transitional from capitalism to communism has already been cited. To clarify his analysis Marx distinguished two stages of communism: a higher stage of material abundance when "to each according to his needs" can become a reality; and a lower stage of "communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society ... in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges" (*Critique of the Gotha Program*). One economic aspect of this lower stage is exemplified by the principle that each worker receives from society not all that he needs but the equivalent of what he contributes to it, the measurement being determined by the amounts of labor embodied in the various products.

At this point Marx makes a highly insightful remark. "Here obviously the same principle prevails as that which regulates the exchange of commodities, as far as this is exchange of equal values ... a given amount of labor in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labor in another form." This same principle is that of the law of value in distribution, in the form of the exchange of equal values — which is how the law of value originates under pre-capitalist commodity production. Even under communism, the principle entails inequality, for the individual workers have different capacities and different needs. Of course, the principle of the law of value under communism operates differently than under capitalism in other respects as well: for one thing, the exchange of equal labor takes place without the intermediary of money; for another, nobody owns anything except his individual consumption goods. These distinctions understood, it is indeed the law of value that Marx is referring to — under communism.

Lenin in *The State and Revolution* elaborated Marx's point that bourgeois elements survive under communism, specifying that this happens in distribution but not in production:

"And so, in the first phase of communist society (generally called socialism) 'bourgeois right' is not abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic transformation so far attained, i.e., only in respect of the means of production. 'Bourgeois right' recognizes them as the private



property of separate individuals. Socialism converts them into *common property*. To that extent, and to that extent alone, 'bourgeois right' disappears.

"However, it continues to exist so far as the other part is concerned; it remains in the capacity of regulator (determining factor) in the distribution of products and allotment of labor among the members of society."

If bourgeois right and the law of value have been eliminated in the sphere of production, that means that production is consciously, scientifically planned by the associated producers. For this reason the society is rightly called communism. The remaining inequalities (among the workers but not between classes because there are no separate social classes once property is held in common), will be overcome when planned production succeeds in achieving the necessary abundance.

### Equality under Stalinism?

The WP-IWG book (on pages 4 and 5) cites the same points from Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* but turns their meaning upside-down — because it repeatedly interprets Marx's description of communism as applying to the transitional workers' state, and moreover, to the "initial stages of transition"! This mistake is perhaps attributable to the fact that in the quoted passages Marx referred to the *early stages* of communist society — but it is inexcusable, since in the same passages he specifies *communist society*, not the society transitional to it.

The passages taken from Marx refer to the paradox of equal bourgeois rights surviving in the first stage of communism despite the achievement of the exchange of equal amounts of labor. Can anyone seriously think this description is true of any Stalinist state, or for that matter, even of the USSR in Lenin's day? Stalinism made *inequality* of exchange rampant — not just in Marx's paradoxical sense but in the everyday decadent capitalist sense. Nor could the Leninist USSR abolish such inequality, although it at least was striving to. How could one think that Marx was describing a workers' state, in its early stages — and especially the monstrous pseudo-workers' states that the WP-IWG believes in?

The mistake is not just an accidental misreading. Nor is it original, for Ernest Mandel did it first (as we noted in *Socialist Voice* No. 2, page 27). It is a political mistake, one that follows directly from the Pabloite-Shachtmanite conception that the law of value is foreign to a workers' state. This blinds the WP-IWG to what Marx plainly wrote. By citing Marx's description of communism, where the law of value has been abolished in production, they are able to attribute this abolition to the workers' state. They can thereby credit Stalinism with their fictional and fantastical "total planification," believing that Marx too thought this possible in a non-communist society.

Worse, since the WP-IWG does recognize that the law of value had not been abolished in the Leninist workers' state of the early 1920's (they correctly describe the economic task of the time as "the struggle against the law of value" — page 10), the logic of their position is that it was Stalinism that abolished the law of value. This certainly suggests, at the very least, that Stalinist rule in the 1930's meant a higher form of workers' state than the USSR of the 1920's — rather than what Trotskyists have always considered it to be, the degeneration and corruption of a workers' state. Stalin, of course, followed this logic to its conclusion and defined the USSR as "socialist" from the mid-1930's on. The WP-IWG have left themselves no reason *in theory* for not doing so too. Their political judgment holds them back — from drawing out the inescapable conclusion of the theory they share with Stalin.

### Value and Reality

Our case against the WP-IWG does not rest upon their distance from Marx: one has the right to differ with Marx or to misunderstand him and still be taken seriously. Nor does it rest on wrong interpretations of terms. The point is that accurate terminology has the scientific purpose of aiding the understanding of reality. Once you climb out of the Pabloite world of Marxist-sounding formulas that do not explain but conceal the real world, the theory falls to the ground.

Take the most important example: what does it really mean to say that the law of value has been abolished? It describes a condition where, for the first time in history, human consciousness can control both nature and humanity's productive system. It says that consciousness — whether imperfect, deformed, degenerated, or none of these — is able to supplant blindness and ignorance, to prevent economic crises and wars, and to dictate where and how all goods are to be produced. It means that genuine planning — not just the initial stages of a workers' state, and not at all the capitalist planning that exists today in both blocs — has replaced the operation of blind laws.

Such planning, among other things, demands a society of material abundance; for if goods are needed that are not produced, that means that production, nature and human economy are still out of control. The law of value, in contrast, is simply an expression of the fact that scarcity exists. It explains how scarce goods are produced and allocated under the class struggle conditions of capitalism. To say that the law of value has already been abolished in part of the globe and that planning exists is to say that abundance has overcome scarcity. Today that is factual nonsense. And to say, as the WP-IWG does, that scarcity exists but the law of value has been abolished in the USSR today is to turn words upside-down.

When scientific terms are so divorced from reality, their meaning is only mumbo-jumbo. A good half of the WP-IWG book — the erudite citations from Marx, the history of the Soviet economy as related to the law of value — serve only to argue something that is absurd on its face: that abolition of the law of value is compatible with scarcity. It is as if a technical text on astrophysics went through page upon page of abstruse formulas only to conclude that the moon was made of green cheese. Once you spot the conclusion you can skip the formulas, because the whole thing is crazy. We have gone through our detailed theoretical arguments not to disprove the WP-IWG's patently false conclusion but to prove the opposite: that since scarcity and material oppression clearly exist in the USSR, the law of value must exist as well. As Marx wrote to Kugelmann, "The science consists precisely in working out *how* the law of value operates." That it *does* operate is (or should be) as obvious (to a Marxist!) as the non-dairy character of the moon.

Professed Marxists who do not perceive the obvious, who so distort the meaning of words that reality is turned upside-down, are blinded by their own political presumptions. It is their desperation to find something progressive in the Stalinist states that leads them to create sophisticated rationalizations. As far as a left-wing tendency like the WP-IWG is concerned, these rationalizations are only a clue that something is dangerously wrong with their politics. Some of the problems with their politics are evident in the same book, when it turns to the revolutionary and counterrevolutionary events that swept over Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War II. These problems, and the additional Marxistical rationalizations concocted to conceal them, are what we will deal with in the next part of this article. ■

# Grenada

*continued from page 2*

workers' party is the only alternative to the reformists' capitulations to capitalism.

Right now North American workers are beginning to stir again, lashed by unemployment and wage cuts. Many are rebelling against reformist misleaders who tell them that survival depends on giving the bosses economic concessions. They too seek a way out, but are being told that the only alternative to Reaganism is the Democratic Party. However, it was the Democrats under Carter who initiated the present policy of austerity for the working class, and the current crop of candidates offer nothing different. Likewise with the Grenada invasion: the leading Democrats produced only a

# Lebanon

*continued from page 32*

with many "Third World" organizations, today it swings little weight. But that is no excuse for the criminal sectarianism that deters some groups from going to actions called by a rival. Several organizations — the Communist Party, the barely still pseudo-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) — are large enough to mobilize respectable numbers if they want to. Even the smaller Spartacist League has been able to call compact but militant rallies on issues that meet its fancy. But this issue was not a matter of choice for anyone claiming the label socialist or anti-imperialist. It was an obligation that all failed.

On October 3, a meeting took place in New York ostensibly to plan an action against U.S. intervention in Lebanon. Present were representatives of the November 29th Coalition (a Palestinian group), PAM, the SWP, the National Black Independent Political Party, Workers World, Casa El Salvador, Line of March, the Lebanese Progressive Forces, CISPES (the Salvadorean guerrilla support group), and the LRP. The letter of invitation sent to us and others was vague on the question of calling for U.S. troops out of Lebanon, and mentioned the possibility of a press conference or rally where "prominent" politicians or labor officials would speak.

## Meeting Resists Action

The meeting opened with a political report by a spokesman for the Lebanese Progressive Forces (the Moslem, Druze and Palestinian forces arrayed against President Gemayel's Phalangist regime), who stated that their chief aim was to oust Gemayel and install a "government of national reconciliation" to represent all the Lebanese people. (We note in passing that the Druze leader and foremost anti-government leader, Walid Jumblatt, has a similar proposal that would include the semi-fascist Phalange.) After the report there was a call for questions, but no one had any. Obviously, the left believed that Lebanese bourgeois nationalism had the last word on what the Lebanese masses want. An LRPer then asked how such a capitalist government could represent the real interests of workers and peasants, only to be told that the meeting was not to be a "forum for polemics."

The only "action" proposed by the sponsors was to be an advertisement in the *New York Times*, signed by congressmen and other liberals, addressed to the U.S. bourgeoisie. The SWP suggested that the ad be endorsed by Coretta Scott King — overlooking her attempt to keep pro-Arab speakers off the platform on August 27. We made a counterproposal for a mass rally, an action that LRPer had been advocating by

rousing chorus of hemming and hawing when they did not give outright support. This is no surprise. After all, the Democrats are the party of Kennedy's Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, of Johnson's invasions of the Dominican Republic and Vietnam.

U.S. workers, like their sisters and brothers elsewhere, will be forced by capitalism itself to fight back. Here too the only alternative to concessions and defeat is to build the internationalist party of socialist revolution. Imperialism is not a special policy of bad capitalists: it is the very essence of the system, the enemy of working people everywhere. The rape of Grenada is a defeat for U.S. workers too. In the future, workers in the U.S. and all over the world will understand this and honor the brave fight put up by Grenadian soldiers and their Cuban defenders, despite the treacherous leaderships of their governments. Never again! ■

phone and personal contact for several weeks. At this meeting it was rejected on the spurious grounds that there was already a cease-fire in Lebanon — as if such a truce could last (there had already been almost 200 "cease-fires" in the Lebanese civil war in the past few years). The cease-fire period could be used for educating the public, it was argued, ignoring the fact that polls report two-thirds of the American people already oppose sending U.S. troops to Lebanon. Furthermore, calling a demonstration without preliminary teach-ins (as in the anti-Vietnam war years) would be sectarian. And so the hot air flowed.

Why these idiot excuses and this refusal to act? We can only surmise, since none of these paralyzed leftists has yet given a political reason to avoid mass action. But two obvious reasons come to mind. One is that the Palestinian and Lebanese misleaders have not demanded the removal of imperialist forces, and the petty-bourgeois left habitually tails people whose programs, like its own, do not stray from the bounds of liberal capitalism. The PLO had invited U.S. and European "peace-keeping" forces to Lebanon to "protect" Moslems and Palestinians, desperately ignoring whose side the imperialists were on. The U.S. left was just as blind then in its uncritical enthusiasm as it is now in its inaction.

The second reason is that liberal bourgeois opinion in the U.S., the primary propaganda target of the left, is strongly sympathetic to Israel's "civilizing mission" in the heathen Middle East and also favors U.S. intervention where necessary to defend imperial interests. Liberals may criticize the specifics of Reagan's policy but do not object to his overall support for Israel and the Phalange. From this follows the tailist left's hesitation to act against U.S. and Israeli imperialism, although rhetoric on the subject is normally superabundant.

The Lebanon question is just the latest proof that the left, given a clear choice between a bourgeois and a proletarian policy, unhesitatingly and unanimously chooses the former. This has happened over every "Third World" liberation struggle (recently Nicaragua and Iran; currently El Salvador, as we documented in *Socialist Voice* No. 13); it happens whenever there are labor struggles where some union bureaucrat talks left and attracts leftist admirers (see, for example, our report of New York City strikes in *Socialist Action*, August 1980); and it happened when the left broke out into bourgeois pacifist hives when cold warrior Jimmy Carter moved toward reinstating the military draft (see *Socialist Voice* No. 9). For proletarian revolutionists this record means only one thing: when the working class rebuilds its revolutionary party, it will have nothing in common with the pseudo-socialist and liberation organizations of today. ■



# Apartheid

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South Africa and to withdraw (divest) public, trade union and university funds from firms operating under apartheid.

Three states (Connecticut, Massachusetts and Michigan) have already passed laws hampering investment of state pension funds in companies active in South Africa (these include most large corporations). Similar bills are pending in other states and cities, including both New York City and New York State. Last spring, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives voted to restrict commercial bank loans to the South African government, require U.S. companies to adhere to certain "fair labor practices," and ban the sale of South African gold coins. In September six Democratic Presidential candidates announced their support for this bill.

This concern by pro-capitalist politicians for South Africa's oppressed is impossible to accept at face value. South Africa has been the U.S.'s chief commercial and military partner in Africa under both Republican and Democratic presidents. The apartheid system, based on police repression, frequent massacres, low-paid black labor, racially determined political exclusion and population control, has served as a profitable bulwark of world imperialism for decades. And it continues to be so. For example, the "fair labor practices" code, an illusion sponsored by the Rev. Leon Sullivan, the token black member of the General Motors board of directors, mandates racially equal wage policies. But the reality is that most black workers are paid from one-quarter to one-tenth as much as whites. And most U.S. companies still oppose black workers' right to organize trade unions at their plants.

The liberal politicians' aim is not to end apartheid, for doing so would not only bring down the Afrikaaner Nationalist government; it would end white rule, spell the end of South African superprofits, enormously weaken the imperialist world economy and doom bourgeois power in all of southern Africa. The liberal aim rather is to sprinkle a few black faces into the economic and political hierarchy and attempt to create a new black middle class — in other words, to save the system of superexploitation by moderating it.

South Africa is not a uniquely abhorrent ulcer on an otherwise healthy body of world capitalism. It is an extreme form of the imperialist oppression that condemns half the world to poverty. It is made possible through the rule of a white settler bourgeoisie and the availability of vast mineral deposits (gold, chromium, manganese, platinum, vanadium, uranium, etc.) much of it extracted by mass, cheap labor. But only the capitalist world economy, presided over today by the U.S., keeps the profits of apartheid flowing and the system alive. As business professor Robert Weigand delicately put it in a *New York Times* debate over divestment, South Africa's minerals "are essential to America's economic and military well-being." And other countries "do not provide the political stability that is essential for long-term assured supplies." Stability at the cost of freedom is an imperialist necessity.

For U.S. capitalism, therefore, to invoke economic boycotts against South Africa is a fraud: it is to blame a junior partner for too vigorously upholding the interests of imperialism as a whole. And it is futile to demand that one or another sector of U.S. capitalism purify itself by selling off its direct interests. Capitalism is an integrated, intertwined, international system: banks and companies, especially the international giants, own each other's shares. Divesting an institution of its direct interests in South Africa only means increasing its indirect holdings. It does not threaten capitalism

— imperialism — as a whole.

As long as society remains capitalist its institutions will behave capitalistically and follow capitalist morality, not "our commitment to the values of universal human dignity that are the heart of all institutions devoted to the pursuit of learning and truth" — the words of Harvard professors Michael Smith and Stanley Hoffman, Weigand's opponents. For example, when Michigan State University decided to divest in 1978, it received a polite letter from Dow Chemical Corporation asking if it no longer wanted gifts and grants from Dow, which makes profits in South Africa. MSU's commitment, it turned out, did not go that far. Similarly, the University of Michigan divested itself only of non-Michigan based companies. It held its stock in Ford and General Motors, two of the biggest U.S. investors in South Africa. The moral is, obviously, that human dignity, learning and truth cannot be pursued too close to home.

Capitalist boycotts are fraudulent and futile, and no one should have any doubts that American universities, including public ones, are capitalist institutions. However, anti-capitalist mass action is quite different. Labor boycotts and strikes, for example, in defense of South Africa's black unions, would be a giant step forward. Mass demonstrations and protests against apartheid or specific atrocities are welcome expressions of solidarity. But let us not be deluded into thinking that capitalist complicity with apartheid can be ended in any other way than by ending capitalism.

The real destroyer of apartheid will not be the benevolence of American corporations but the struggle of the South African blacks themselves. And given the size, strength, militant experience and explosive potential of the black proletariat, there is no possibility of a stabilized, integrated capitalism. The black masses will learn that a bought-off middle class and labor aristocracy will offer them little. Conditions are ripe for the only real solution: a proletarian socialist revolution. And that will mean not divestment of the corporations but expropriation.

As *Socialist Voice* put it in 1977 when the resistance intensified ("Strategy for the Anti-Apartheid Struggle," No.4, page 3):

**"In South Africa the proletariat has a specific weight far beyond that of any other country in Africa. This does not mean that a South African revolution will automatically become socialist and proletarian, for the South African working class, no more than any other is not guaranteed to become communist. It does mean that the requisite objective conditions are present for the development of advanced working-class consciousness, that is, for Marxism. But this task itself requires a conscious struggle and therefore the construction of the organization that embodies such a struggle, the revolutionary party."**

What about the South African divestment campaigns on U.S. campuses? There is much that students can do, but trying to mobilize university trustees for morality is hopeless. Worse, when a leftist sheen of socialism is thrown in, this only strengthens the illusion of ending apartheid under capitalism as another in the endless catalogue of "first stages" aimed at postponing socialist consciousness. Revolutionary-minded students can make good use of their time, resources and dedication to study, research and propagandize for Marxism — as well as joining the solidarity actions and demonstrations over South Africa, struggling to win them from pro-capitalist illusions. The rediscovery and renewal of Marxism is a crucial part of the re-creation of the world party of socialist revolution, the Fourth International. ■

# Black Strategy

continued from page 1

Real unity means rejecting the present narrow infighting, which is solely concerned with how to obtain crumbs while the pie itself is rapidly disappearing. This would mean a class struggle for genuine gains against the entire leadership and its strategy to resurrect the capitalist Democratic Party and all of its treacherous politicians.

For all its narrowness and dead-end quality, the dispute over how to maximize black clout inside the Democratic Party reflects real questions. Jackson, at the June 1983 meeting of

the nomination. They do believe that a black candidate could accelerate black registration, inspire a much larger black vote and help elect black candidates for lesser offices. They claim that Jackson's campaign could force commitments on important issues from the frightened white liberal politicians. Even if Jackson cannot win many convention delegates, blacks will have consolidated themselves as a solid enough force so that the Democrats will have to take them more into account. Further, it is just possible that Jackson could place himself at the center of a wider "rainbow coalition," which would include women's, peace, ecology and Hispanic interest groups and thereby add to the blacks' bargaining position.

The differences are clear enough, but the common

*Democratic Presidential aspirants Mondale, Cranston and Hollings pose with Jesse Jackson. Jackson's campaign is designed to ward off black explosion. Democratic Party strategy will never disarm U.S. capitalism, only workers and oppressed.*



black leadership forces held in Chicago, steamrolled the passage of a resolution endorsing the idea of a black candidacy. Although the resolution did not name Jackson as the candidate, few observers doubted that he had anyone else in mind. The formation of an "exploratory committee" under the aegis of Jackson's biggest promoter, Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, was only one signal of his intentions. The "Run, Jesse, run!" outcry which greeted his appearances everywhere among black audiences is testimony not only to a genuine sentiment which is beginning to swell but to an organized drive by a wing of the black political elite.

Ranged in opposition to a black presidential campaign are such figures as Coretta Scott King, Washington D.C.'s Congressional Delegate Walter Fauntroy, NAACP leader Benjamin Hooks, Rev. Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), William Lucy of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and Andrew Young, Mayor of Atlanta and Jimmy Carter's front man in the United Nations. Most of them are overtly or covertly in support of Walter Mondale for the Democratic Party nomination.

The anti-Jackson forces argue that a black candidacy not only has no hope of winning but could also cripple the chances of the more liberal, pro-civil rights Democrats like Mondale. They assert that a black candidate would strain relations with the Democratic Party as a whole and its liberal wing in particular. A Jackson campaign could realistically garner only a handful of delegate votes at the party convention, given the Democratic Party rules. For this the whole network of relations built up for years with liberal politicians would be weakened.

The Jackson proponents do not claim that a black could win

agreement on the need for an electoral Democratic Party strategy is equally so. It is not by accident that the "black leadership family" is now called the 1984 Election Strategy Committee. The significance of this unanimity is highlighted by the fact that in the past, the black leadership has been torn apart by radically different perspectives on how to achieve goals and has rarely united in giving priority to electoralism. Non-violent direct action, massive judicial efforts, religious appeals and social quietism, as well as guerrilla warfare, separatist tactics, self-defense and even mass action, have all been advocated at one time or another by major leaders.

But hardly an article is written today on black politics which does not quote some politician or minister asserting the blacks have learned to "play the game" and that they have "matured." The present leadership meetings consist of Democratic Party politicians and influential organizational and ministerial leaders, and are far less varied than, for example, the conferences in the 1970's whose attendees included proponents of radical action. Today, advocates of strategies more radical than electoralism exist only on the periphery of the black leadership; center stage is accorded to the camp followers of the Democratic Party. And their politics fit the mold. Both wings are undeniably pro-capitalist, and pro-U.S. capitalist at that, which means pro-imperialist. The newly presidential Jackson originally supported keeping U.S. troops fighting in Lebanon. "We have to live with certain of these contradictions," he said (*Village Voice*, October 4), echoing the apologetics of imperialist liberals everywhere. After the 200 marines were killed he urged a U.S. pullout to allow less-exposed countries to pacify Lebanon for imperial-



ism. Both Reagan and the Democrats seek to use pawn nations to front for U.S. stabilization plans in Central America. Jackson and other Democrats extend that policy to Lebanon.

### The Democrats' Historical Role

How did this happen? After all, it was only a few years ago that revulsion and contempt for the Democratic Party was so great even among those who grudgingly voted for it that no such total commitment could be made by public figures. Moreover, the economic tailspin with its inflation, unemployment, retreat on social welfare, educational collapse and urban decay accelerated throughout the 1970's and blew away so much of the highly touted "permanent gains" of the "New Deal", "Fair Deal" and "Great Society" that Democratic liberalism seemed like a macabre joke to dispossessed blacks. How is it that the Democrats are now being resurrected as the party of hope for the black masses (and the white as well)?

Blacks historically supported the Republican Party, the party of Lincoln, until the late 1920's when they steadily turned toward the Democrats. This process accompanied the Northern and urban emigration of the hitherto predominantly Southern rural black population. The basis for the switch was similar to the enrollment of foreign immigrant workers into the Democratic city machines. The Democratic Party helped in the adjustment process for blacks and delivered crumbs, very small ones indeed, mostly to the tiny black petty bourgeoisie, petty job seekers, small businessmen, churchmen and the like. To others it offered a little hope, in the wake of the repression and collapse of the labor revolts of the post World War II period on the one hand and the massive Garvey movement on the other.

The working-class battles of the thirties endangered the very existence of capitalism. The threat to property posed by general strikes, sitdowns, plant seizures and mass battles forced concessions from the ruling class. Far from being the benevolent dispensers of largesse, Roosevelt and the Democrats doled out concessions actually won at the factory gates and on the streets by fighting workers. Blacks played a limited but important role in key strike situations. But their small voting power, determined by their small numbers in the North and discrimination sanctioned by government and the Democratic Party in the South, meant that blacks had little political weight. Blacks did benefit as a result of the general concessions won by the working class, but given their frequent status as landless agricultural laborers and marginal workers in marginal industries, they benefited even less than others.

### Party Rested on Racism

The Democratic Party rested during the thirties on a base of urban workers and small farmers in the South and elsewhere plus various layers of the middle class. The dominant control over the party, however, lay with sections of the big bourgeoisie coupled to reactionary Southern rural landlords, local businesses and oil operators. The landlords and small-town businessmen dominating the "Solid South" were the keystone in maintaining the party's stability. The big-city machines, largely controlled by Catholic immigrant leaders, the unions (both AFL and especially the new, radical CIO) as well as the blacks, were all tied to the party whose existence was maintained by a venomously, anti-Catholic, anti-labor and racist power center, later named the "Dixiecrats." That is why the liberal Democrats talked loudly but swung small sticks at the Southern reactionaries. Much of the financial as well as political power of the city machines and the ethnic and labor leaders came from their links to Democratic power in Washington — which in turn rested upon the Southern

Bourbons.

The other keystone of the alliance was the Communist Party and other leftists, who played a crucial role in allying with Roosevelt and the Democrats to ensure that rebellious workers did not transcend industrial unionism into political action independent of the Democratic Party. (See "U.S. Labor and the Left" in *Socialist Voice* No. 5.)

War and post-war prosperity wedded to substantive transformations in agrarian and industrial technology transformed the South into a predominantly urban and increasingly industrial area. Economic power shifted to urban capitalists in the South, but for many years political power remained in the hands of the Dixiecrats. Neither the national Democrats nor the Southern urban capitalists (and their Northern partners) wished to do more than cosmetic reforms, since the Dixiecrats remained a bulwark against unionization in the South and the key to maintaining the Democratic Party nationally. (For details, see "Class Struggle in the South," *Socialist Voice* Nos. 2 and 3.)

### Mass Upheavals Force Changes

The post-World War II prosperity, the cold war, the colonial revolution overseas and now the increasingly urbanized condition of blacks all played a role in spurring the mass black upheavals of the late 1950's, the 1960's and the early 1970's. Among other consequences, the rebellion destroyed the power of an old black leadership in the South which rested upon a matter-of-fact alliance with the segregationists. It also forced Washington and the Southern urban bourgeoisie to assume the political reins in the South and grudgingly oppose the waning Dixiecrats.

The comparatively small share of prosperity that reached blacks served to reinforce and expand the small middle-class leadership. The threat of the black masses demanding an end to discrimination and the right to jobs, reinforced the role of black leadership organizations as brokers between the desires of the masses and the bourgeoisie and its political representatives in the Democratic Party. In the South, the new circumstances helped create an urban-based coalition between the newly empowered capitalist forces and the black leadership, based on the end of formal, legal discrimination. Black leaders thereby played an increasingly important role in the political structure and in the Democratic Party in key cities of the South, in alliance with the "business community."

The national Democratic Party also took black leaders into greater account. However, the power structure was unwilling to disperse significant benefits to the black brokers. Martin Luther King, Jr. spend innumerable hours explaining to the Democrats that they ought to increase the sops given blacks through his good offices, to give him a few "victories" instead of standoffs; for if he was unable to deliver, mass black anarchy would occur.

As Malcolm X pointed out in his analysis of the 1963 March on Washington:

"When Martin Luther King failed to desegregate Albany, Georgia, the civil rights struggle in America reached its low point. King became bankrupt almost, as a leader. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was in financial trouble; and it was in trouble, period, with the people when they failed to desegregate Albany, Georgia. Other Negro civil-rights leaders of so-called national stature became fallen idols."

Malcolm went on to point out the underlying relations between the Democrats in Washington and the black leadership shown through the microcosm of the events leading

up to the march:

"It was the grass roots out there in the street. It scared the white man to death, scared the white power structure in Washington, D.C. to death. I was there. When they found that this black steamroller was going to come down on the capital, they called in Wilkins, they called in Randolph, they called in these national Negro leaders that you respect and told them, 'Call it off.' Kennedy said, 'Look, you all are letting this thing go too far.' And Old Tom said, 'Boss, I can't stop it, because I didn't start it.' I'm telling you what they said. They said, 'I'm not even in it, much less at the head of it.' They said, 'These Negroes are doing things on their own. They're running ahead of us.' And that old shrewd fox, he said, 'If you all aren't in it, I'll put you in it. I'll put you at the head of it. I'll endorse it. I'll welcome it. I'll help it. I'll join it.' ...

"Once they formed (the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership) with the white man over it, he promised them and gave them \$800,000 to split up among the Big Six; and told them that after the march was over they'd give them \$700,000 more. A million and a half dollars — split up between leaders that you have been following, going to jail for, crying crocodile tears for. And they're nothing but Frank James and Jesse James and the what-do-you-call-'em brothers.

"As soon as they got the setup organized, the white man made available to them top public-relations experts; opened the news media across the country at their disposal, which then began to project these Big Six as the leaders of the march. Originally they weren't even in the march."

As the 1960's struggle deepened the black masses got out of hand. Riots and rebellions burgeoned in ghetto after ghetto as the masses, tired of promises, demanded delivery. The initial leadership of the NAACP, SCLC, CORE and SNCC increasingly lost power to newer and younger black power forces who tried to reflect the radical demands of the black masses. But not even these elements could connect solidly with the masses in motion. Riot after riot, revolt after revolt demonstrated that if the moderate leadership, including King, could hardly venture into the ghettos safely, even the more accepted leaders could not lead or control the events. The masses were out of hand, as the white-bourgeois political forces learned when they attempted to pacify the upheavals through dealings with local leaders who proved to have no mass following or power to stop the upheaval.

### Struggles Won Concessions

It was in this period, up through the early 1970's, that the political establishment began to dole out concessions to blacks under the threat of mass struggles. Of course, as with all concessions and reforms, the bourgeoisie did it in its own way. It channelled the fund so as to build up a leadership in the communities that would have actual clout among black workers through its brokerage role. This meant recruitment into the various programs, projects, plans, community-elected boards, etc., of elements who were radical enough (often sincerely so, for what that's worth) to gain a response. Thus, painstakingly, a new leadership (including some elements of the old) was slowly forged. The remaining prosperity, although imperiled by the increasingly dangerous crisis of capitalism which resurfaced in the late 1960's, was sufficient to dole out enough gains to provide hope for masses of blacks. This response to mass pressure came at a time when blacks, fed up with liberal promises, were voting less and less and were

becoming more and more contemptuous of the Democratic Party.

### Recession Boosts Electoralism

The revolt of the black masses was stalled during the 1970's, partially as a result of the transitory gains it made, partially because it found no alternative leadership it trusted to fight for real and lasting changes. But the major reason why the movement did not transcend its previous limits was the recession of 1973-75, which devastated black hopes. The recession put an end to the wave of wildcat strikes which shook American industry in the early 1970's. It quieted the riot-torn ghettos. It enabled the established union bureaucrats and the patched-up and refurbished black leadership to find a way to maintain their grip over their bases.

Gingerly at first, the AFL-CIO began to point to the Democratic Party and electoralism as the safe and responsible alternative to industrial militancy. By keeping struggles localized and separate, with the aid of the recession it succeeded in regaining its authority. The black leaders too began slowly moving toward increased Democratic activity.

Militancy subsided and hopelessness grew at the base; for years there was little popular response. Black workers tried riots again in Miami and elsewhere. Isolated and without clear leadership, in bad times when the bourgeoisie was on the offensive and would and could give less, they failed. Gradually, seeing no other alternative and no avenue to mass action, working-class people of all races renewed their interest in electoralism.

The Census Bureau reported that workers were beginning to vote more often, particularly the jobless and particularly blacks. 34.1 percent of the jobless said they voted in the 1982 Congressional elections as opposed to 27.4 percent in 1978. Black voting went from 37 percent in 1978 to 43 in 1982, twice the increase among whites. The traditional gap between white and black proportional turnouts at the polls narrowed.

Even within the diversity of black leaders during the 1970's, the specific weight of Democratic politicians was slowly but steadily climbing. Historically, of course, black office-holders had been few and far between, and black leaders not directly involved in the political structure (such as ministers or professional organizational executives) would be dealt with by white politicians because they carried more weight. But politicians were becoming a new and important factor. For example, between 1978 and 1982 the number of black state legislators increased from 35 to 355, the biggest leap ever. Nevertheless, the total of 5160 black officials nationally, while significantly higher than in the past, still amounts to only one percent of all elective offices in the U.S.

The drive to get blacks to the polls in order to increase the specific weight of the black leadership within the Democratic Party is growing. The Atlanta-based Voter Education Project has been conducting a major campaign to register 350,000 new Southern black voters by the end of the year. Supermarkets, shopping malls and department stores have set up permanent registration tables. Radio commercials are designed to add to the hoopla. The NAACP aims to register two million new voters nationwide by the end of the year. It is sponsoring an "Overground Railroad" to accelerate its effort to reach potential black voters. However, the most significant jumps in black voting stem from elections in which black candidates run with a chance of winning. Last but not least, Jesse Jackson has been crusading day after day to whip up registration sentiment among black youth, with substantial results. The pattern is clear. So are the reasons. The con-



sequences for the black masses will be disastrous.

Let us sum up. The Democratic Party has never been the source of black gains. At times it disburses the gains actually won by mass challenges to the system. Its function is to allocate these gains through a system of brokers (leaders) who have or who have been given clout within specific sectors organized as "interest groups." The Democratic Party delivers only to the degree that capitalism can afford to. It could never, even at the height of a prosperity greater than any prosperity that ever occurred in the history of the world, deliver enough to feed, clothe, and house its entire working class. Now that the bubble has burst and the chronic, mortal crisis has resurfaced, the sops are tinier and the many previous gains are eroded or taken entirely away.

The Democratic Party is the institution within which the various sectors are forced to exercise their clout against each other for a portion of the small take. Not only does the party mechanism, with its rewards dependent upon votes and maneuvers, encourage sectors to vie with each other for scarce sops — but within each group, separate interests are forced to clash in order to maximize their take. Democratic Party politics internally — with city pitted against city, region against region, state against state, Hispanics against blacks against Poles against Italians against Irish against Jews for a piece of the federal budget action — is the war of all against all which mirrors life under capitalism. That is the purpose of the Democratic Party. Through the allocation of sops and reforms, it is designed to divide, conquer and destroy existing or potential mass movements. No wonder the present dispute within the black leadership is so hostile.

As we pointed out in our last issue, the rewards given through the brokering facility of the leaderships of the various

halted the "momentum of social and economic improvement" for blacks. The disproportionate attack on blacks as opposed to whites, and the fact that it reaches up into the middle strata so dramatically, is not only the cause of fears, anguish and the revival of social motion among the mass of black workers and unemployed. It is also behind the present turmoil within the black leadership.

### The Divided Black Democrats

At first glance, the difference between the anti-Jackson forces and the pro-Jackson forces seems to be between those black politicians who depend either upon white votes for their power or upon their ties to white politicians and interests. It is no accident, therefore, that Andrew Young, Mayor Coleman Young of Detroit, Mayor W. Wilson Goode of Philadelphia and many of the Congressional Black Caucus members support Mondale rather than Jackson. Likewise, Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, whose power rests on an almost exclusively black base, supports Jackson. It is no accident that aspiring black candidates will tend to favor Jackson because he will accelerate the black for a black vote and will quite probably enlarge the numbers of elected blacks.

There is more to it, however. The Jackson candidacy finds great support among the ministers who constitute such an important part of the black leadership. As *Time* magazine recently pointed out, "If Jackson runs, the foundation for his campaign will be provided by the network of black churches across the nation, still the most influential institution in the black community. In July, 125 ministers met in East St. Louis to form a Draft Jesse Jackson Committee, aimed at collecting one million signatures."



*The 1963 rally in Washington. Blacks made gains only through struggle and rebellion. Bargaining with the system lost many of them. A new black explosion means hope not only for blacks but for all workers.*

sectors are designed also to split up class consciousness since class demands cannot be met by capitalism. This is not just "theory" but practice; and as we showed, sections of the bourgeoisie are perfectly well aware of it, discuss it and refine it. As well, the rewards must of necessity be distributed unequally within each group: the brokers, bourgeoisie (if any) and the middle strata get the most, and the base, the more exploited workers get vicarious identifications, group pride, hope for the future — but far less or nothing at all for themselves. When things get worse, as they have been, the sops dwindle to nothing and even the upper layers of the particular sector are undercut. This is exactly what has happened among blacks, and with a vengeance.

The Census Bureau recently reported with amazing understatement that recession, unemployment and poverty had

On the contrary, the professionals associated with the NAACP, the SCLC and above all the Urban League oppose a black candidacy. Their budgets are substantially dependent upon white philanthropies and corporations. It is not that these people are simply bought off, rather their whole mode of thought is conditioned by their material base. Social change and defense of blacks (and their personal security in the organizational bureaucracies) as they see it rests with close ties to "allies" who have the same desire for ameliorative change designed to prevent outbreaks which threaten their common stability. Their hostility to such a campaign at the moment is quickened by the economic crisis. The recent demeaning court fight between the NAACP and the NAACP Legal Fund after so many years of coexistence was due to their desperate competition for funds. They don't want to strain relations with

the liberal white bourgeoisie.

The leadership's willingness to maintain ties to whites at all costs was shown at the heralded August 27 March on Washington led by the black establishment. The program of jobs, peace and freedom, already vague enough to mean all things to virtually all people, was made even vaguer by attempts to water it down. Any idea that "peace" meant opposition to existing war was ruled out to satisfy Zionist organizations and the labor bureaucrats. "Jobs" has so little content that General Motors can sound more radical on the subject. "Freedom" was not allowed to mean reproductive rights for women, and the march leaders attempted to "defend" gay rights by ignoring gays' existence. Even so, the AFL-CIO was present only in the form of its black-based and leftist-led unions; Lane Kirkland stayed away. The Urban League, fearful of the straining of relations, opposed the march. The pro-Israel groups refused to be mollified.

These pulls and tears also affect the Jackson wing. They too have "connections" with the white-dominated power structure of the Democratic Party and the myriad of organizations, philanthropies and institutions interpenetrated with it. But their relative insulation is higher. Hatcher has less concern about immediate white tie-ups than does either of the Youngs. So too with the black churches. They rest foursquare on the black community. Historically they were not only its strongest institution but also its most nearly independent one. While their mortgages might be held by white-owned banks, their essential financial base is in the black caste. It is no accident that they are aligned to a Jackson candidacy.

As the contest unfolds, the heat builds up. At a recent meeting in Chicago, *Time* reported that Andrew Young defensively challenged Jesse Jackson and added: "I consider myself in the 'family'." Jackson retorted; "Dick Hatcher is family. You're in the neighborhood."

Clearly Jackson is on the offense and the anti-candidacy forces are retreating. In fact, Young and many of the others are being forced to cover their pro-Mondale support and either line up behind Jackson or equivocate as the campaign develops. They may have no choice, given the fact that while they must retain ties to the whites, they are worthless to the white capitalists if they are read out of the black leadership "family."

### Assimilation vs. Integration

In the past, one current of the black leadership pointed to assimilation and integration as the road forward. The other current was identified as separatist or nationalist. (See "The Black Struggle Today" in *Socialist Voice* No. 7.) Integrationism has always meant equality and acceptance of blacks by white America into its class structure as it stands. It reflected the deep need in the black community for equality and the social action to achieve it. Nationalism, on the other hand, reflected the need of blacks for group defense, distrust in the promises always broken by others and group solidarity. Its ideology was that of national separation, but in reality it reflected attempts to build separate and independent economic, social and political institutions in existing black sections of America. Integration was impossible under capitalism, which could never afford real equality. Nationalism was equally impossible in that the black economy is solidly intertwined with and subordinate to the dominant white capitalist American economy. In imperialist America neither was a way out.

Both middle-class ideologies picked up real support in the black proletariat and subproletariat. Integrationism could

entrap black workers because of its seeming identity with the interracialism they seek, which can only be achieved in the internationalist world of abundance under socialism. Nationalism too was a class-negated version of the masses' understanding, taking advantage of their yearning for group solidarity to survive and their awareness that social promises by others are believable only if blacks wield power.

Jackson bases his campaign on the middle-class sectors who wish to strengthen their own roles by maximizing group power. His relation to the Democrats is similar to that of the machine-oriented white ethnic politicians in its openly quid-pro-quo character. The party, he has said, "cannot receive investment without promising dividends and returns." His readiness to sit down with Alabama's Governor Wallace shows him dealing in the Democratic Party in the hard-headed terms that the game demands. His opponents reflect the traditional liberal reformer style which, while not averse to building its black voting base, emphasizes instead integrated leadership of "men of good will" fighting for common social needs. Jackson's self-help program is hardly the same as the grandiose nationalist ambitions for a separate economy, but it reflects more moderate impulses of a similar kind.

### Democrats and the Black Masses

Jackson is feeling his oats also because his campaign touches a responsive chord among black workers and unemployed. "Run, Jesse, run!" was not manufactured out of thin air.

The sentiment is growing: "We want ours." This is seen in ethnic-racial terms, not class terms. All blacks are under the gun, even if the attack is disproportionately heavy on the poorer mass. Unfortunately, the masses have interpreted past history as being the failure "to play the game." What did mass action, riots and strikes get us in the end? What we should have done or should do now is what other sectors and ethnic groups have done to get ahead: play the game inside the Democratic Party; it's the only game in town. That's why the black masses, as opposed to the leaders, are not ecstatic about the Democratic Party. They know the other racist forces that are there, they know it isn't a question of good will, of liberal do-goodism, philanthropy and the like — it's quid pro quo. You can't be enthusiastic about such an institution; you hold your nose and grab what you can.

Take the August 27 march. The leadership would have loved to turn the march into a rally for the Democratic Party. It could not do so. The march was anti-Reagan and for voter registration, but the call could not be, "Let's all turn out for the good old Democratic Party!" No Democratic Party leaders (not even Presidential candidates, aside from Jackson) were presented to the crowd. While the intent of the march leaders was to begin building up for such an ardent embrace, it could not yet be brought off. This is not because the leaders aren't in love already. It is not because the largely middle-class and labor aristocratic marchers won't vote Democrat. The absent black masses will also probably vote Democrat; but just that the mass of black people themselves still regard the Democratic Party with contempt, coolness and a lack of great expectations.

We are for Jackson, people feel, not the Democrats. But one of the reasons we are for Jackson is that he is mobilizing a black power base inside the party of reality, not a powerless sure loser outside. Oh yes, Jackson will lose inside the Democratic Party, but that's not the point. We can't win the whole pie, but we want our share and we can force them to give it to us.

His opponents call Jackson a demagogue, and certainly he is that — an opportunist and a hypocrite. Masses of black people



are perfectly aware of his demagoguery, but they view with disdain the more hypocritical elitism of liberals who make lofty promises but don't deliver. They advocate programs which always seem to sacrifice strong black solidarity for hollow promises and utopian dreams of whites and blacks hand-in-hand together. Maybe that's real at Yale, but not in Harlem.

Black solidarity is a need that is immediately perceived. Indeed, Jackson is well aware that feelings of black unity as a result of the Carter-Reagan attack are burgeoning, with or without him. His forces seek to channel this justified sentiment into support for the leadership's Democratic Party strategy. Many are buying this line despite their contempt for the Democrats, because they believe that Jackson's black solidarity efforts will prove more important than his party ties. But the sense of unity that Jackson is playing upon is actually a two-edged sword.

### Blacks and Class Struggle

The black masses perceive part of the nature of the Democratic Party but not the whole of it. They have learned that their past mass actions failed. They have not learned that the reason for their failure was that they didn't transcend the Democratic Party and smash it, not that they didn't use it.

The missing dimension in this black working-class view is class itself. Black workers do understand that white workers are also hurting; but they are also aware of the racism of many white workers. They also do not see any class banner to group around. Does the labor bureaucracy provide a better, more attractive way out than black identity and Jesse Jackson? Black unionized workers have even greater contempt for the union bureaucracy than do the whites. In the absence of class action, class consciousness is predictably low. And this, given the reality of American society, spells disaster for blacks.

Racism is fundamental to the existence of American capitalism. That is the Achilles heel of the middle-class strategies. For capitalism requires a permanent army of unemployed. It must divide the working class by wielding more favored workers against a clearly demarcated outcaste group occupying the lowest rungs on the ladder. For black workers to play the divisive, competitive game that is the heart of the Democratic Party strategy is to guarantee their defeat. Black workers above all need a class-wide strategy to survive.

If the struggle is confined to the Democratic Party, the different sectors will be competing with each other in an environment in which the government has far less fat than even during the last great depression. Then it could go into debt to finance the small sops it gave; today the staggering debt is already a major factor dragging the system down. So the competition can only intensify.

White workers as well as blacks face mounting unemployment. Those who still think they have it made are in for a great shock. American capitalism has always used elements among impoverished white workers to attack their black fellow-workers. Under these conditions intensified sectoral competition will lead to race war, a leap toward fascism.

In the 1930's Southern segregation stabilized the Democratic Party coalition by keeping blacks so far down and so marginal to heavy industry that they were only a symbolic challenge to white workers. That is no longer true. Race war will come quicker and more viciously among today's Democratic voters than yesterday's. The racist vitriol spouted by white Democratic leaders in Chicago trying to inflame their sectorally divided base is only a mild foretaste. And this is a struggle that blacks cannot win.

Jesse Jackson's chasing after rainbows will not help. A

coalition composed of environmentalists, Hispanics, women, gays, senior citizens, etc., with each constituent part organized for its own advancement, is a set-up for the capitalists' divide and conquer tactics. In the setting of economic crisis, when the illusion of a pot of gold is blown away, the different components with their bourgeois leaders will inevitably turn on each other.

This is the deadly trap black workers are being led into today. But the situation is far from hopeless. Just as in the 1930's, just as is happening in a dozen countries around the world today, American working people will inevitably fight back against the capitalist assault. They will fight not only out of desperation against the loss of their material gains but also from their strength: it is they who make industry produce, who yield the capitalists' profits — and who therefore can stop production, stop profits, and restart industry on a socialist, non-profiteering basis. Black workers, among the most exploited, are also among the most strategically located in heavy industry in the United States.

Moreover, there is another major difference between today and the 1930's. Not only is Roosevelt's Democratic Party ally, the Southern industrial landlord, gone, but so is his solid left ally that served to keep the workers from independent political action. The Communist Party is today a shadow of the powerful force in the unions and the factories that it was in the thirties. Its power among black workers is also greatly reduced. Today's left, divided into a myriad of groups the bulk of which pimp for the Democratic Party, cannot form such a unified force of betrayal again. Therein lies the hope that mass action, the general strike, which unifies the class in action will not be forced aside by fake leftists who have gained authority among workers. The weakness of the pseudo-socialist left today and the limitations of its passive electoralism can only serve to postpone the workers' upheaval, not to prevent it.

### Unity on Working-Class Terms

Jesse Jackson and similar demagogues, in playing upon the theme of black unity and promising gains impossible under capitalism, only whet the masses' appetites. Even a passive electoral display of black power, coupled to the inevitable disappointment at its betrayal, could be an impetus toward the mass action it seeks to prevent. Over time it can lead to the rejection of the petty-bourgeois misleaders, both pro-capitalists like Jackson and "anti-capitalists" like his leftist cheerleaders who have too great a stake in the system to challenge it. This can lead to the creation of a Marxist revolutionary workers' party to pose a real alternative to capitalism.

Such a revolutionary party will inevitably reflect the fact that blacks will play a leadership role in any American workers' upheaval, far out of proportion to their minority numbers. It would not only proclaim the interracialist program so necessary for black workers but would champion the practical fighting experience of the super-exploited black caste. It would be a living example of black solidarity, one that would attract class-conscious white workers as well to the universal proletarian cause.

But such unity can come only on working-class terms with proletarian leadership, not that of the brokers and their narrow, sectoral sops. The truly American paradox is that, given the systemic racism and the economic crisis, few sectoral gains are possible for the most militant and anti-capitalist "sector" of the working class, the black masses. They cannot free themselves without leading the working class as a whole to a new world. ■

## Inaction Shames Left

# U.S. Out of Lebanon!

It is both remarkable and shameful. The United States has 1200 marines in Lebanon. They have been engaging in combat, as have American ships offshore, helicopters and aircraft. They are defending the minority government of a semi-fascist party. In Congress, the debate over the U.S. military deployment has echoed with memories of the Vietnam war. Yet there have been no significant protests called by the American left or "peace movement" against the U.S.'s active military intervention.

When over 200 marines were blown up, large numbers of Americans demanded to know why the U.S. was in Lebanon at all. Opportunistic Democrat and Republican party hacks, cold warriors all, raised a stink over the U.S. presence. But still the peace groups maintained their shameful peace.

### Little Protest over Lebanon

The so-called movement is not allergic to demonstrations nor incapable of organizing them. It has marched to Washington annually, religiously (in more senses than one), to protest U.S. intervention in El Salvador. It marches periodically for a nebulous "peace," most recently on August 27 in honor of Martin Luther King, most numerous on June 12 of last year for the nuclear freeze fraud. Last year in New York the big peace march said nothing about the murderous Israeli invasion of Lebanon taking place simultaneously; this year, when the U.S. is directly leading the imperialist forces, it again says nothing. Undoubtedly, at the forthcoming November 12 march on Washington, the U.S. assault on Grenada will be high on the list of atrocities under protest. We predict that Lebanon, however, will continue to be a submerged issue unless the situation absolutely forces a turnaround.

We can report two examples. The People's Anti-war Mobilization (PAM), controlled by the Workers World Party, did call one rally in protest at Ronald Reagan's presence in New York (for his U.N. speech) on September 26. This



U.S. marines in Lebanon. "Peacekeepers" aid Phalange regime's war on masses.

was a week after the U.S. Sixth Fleet began its naval bombardment of anti-government militiamen and Druze and Moslem civilians. "U.S. Out of Lebanon" was one of many official slogans. But even though that's where U.S. forces were engaged in a shooting war, this slogan was chanted last and least often, as an afterthought. Worse, it was a tiny, feeble demonstration of 200 or less; previous Reagan forays into New York had brought out tens of thousands in anger. And the LRP was the only openly socialist organization to send a contingent in support.

Although PAM was at one time grasping for hegemony among peace groups, (see "Anti-Reaganism vs. Anti-Capitalism" in *Socialist Voice* No. 14) and had intimate ties

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# Divestment No Answer to Apartheid

The following leaflet was distributed by the LRP at the National Student Anti-Apartheid Conference on October 7-9 in New York City. The conference leadership, as well as the bulk of student and leftist participants, were busy pushing the divestment campaign which the leaflet addresses. Practically everyone admitted among themselves that divestment doesn't work but defended their campaign anyway as the only thing students and others could do to oppose apartheid. The idea that students could be won to a common understanding and hatred of capitalism was regarded as preposterous by the leaders, mostly self-proclaimed Marxists. Their preference for gimmickry over real Marxism proves their cynicism toward American students, South African workers, and the possibilities of a serious anti-apartheid struggle.

So student activists were counselled to cast aside radical rhetoric and talk about "improvement of our college" in order

to win over more conservative students, to appeal to the moral convictions of religious students, etc. In particular, they were taught how to "educate the trustees" to the benefits of divestment: selling stocks can rid the university or corporation of a "risky" investment and make a big profit at the same time, they argued! Herein lies the heart of the divestment campaign. It is a thoroughly bourgeois strategy of appealing to a section of the capitalist class to support reform in South Africa.

Outrage against South Africa's racist apartheid system is worldwide. In recent years the militant struggles of black youth and industrial workers, whose unionized strength is increasing, have inspired solidarity movements in many countries. As a result, a campaign has developed in the U.S. to get American companies to remove their operations from

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