

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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Re-Create  
the Fourth International

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## Left Sinks into Democrats' Swamp

Many black workers today are being won to electoral politics in general and Reverend Jesse Jackson's campaign in particular. Given present circumstances this is understandable. Reagan's economic "recovery" only serves to mock the stark reality of omnipresent poverty and unemployment in the ghettos. What alternative is there to playing the electoral game?

And in racist America, the idea of an obviously sophisticated and charismatic black leader commanding universal attention and running a credible campaign for the highest office in politics is a great source of pride. It is therefore no surprise that ordinary black workers who make no pretense of being class-conscious Marxists are buying Jackson and the strategy of electoralism in the capitalist Democratic Party. But growing numbers of self-proclaimed socialists are doing so as well. Rival leftists are vying with each other in a mad effort to win the fervency prize in support of the Reverend Jackson.

Many of these leftists argue that racism is the key question in the coming election period. They are right. A fight against racism could unlock the class struggle and open the way to black liberation. But a tragically large number have concluded that the war against racism must be initiated through electoralism, Jesse Jackson and the Democratic Party. This course will have the effect opposite to that intended: it will slam the door to black liberation shut.

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and the Communist Party (CP) are both reformist outfits which habitually splash around in the Democratic Party swamp. Today they find themselves unable to choose between Jackson



*"Reds" join white and blue. Jesse Jackson, hero of the U.S. "left," carrying the star-spangled banner. And some people dare call these "socialists" unpatriotic.*

and his union bureaucracy-backed opponent Walter Mondale.

What is more distinctive about 1984 is that the more "revolutionary" left, like the Communist Workers Party (CWP), the Workers World Party (WWP), Line of March and the *Guardian* newspaper are all jumping into the same swamp. And they are joined by many "Marxist-Leninists" and independent radicals in crossing the class line. Once there they

*continued on page 12*

## Labor's Dead-End Electoralism

The increased role of organized labor in the electoral process, long overshadowed on the left by the impact of the Jesse Jackson campaign, has been highlighted by Walter Mondale's defeats in early Democratic primaries and caucuses. Under the leadership of president Lane Kirkland, the AFL-CIO has for the first time endorsed a candidate for president before the primaries, and the labor unions have thrown themselves whole hog into the Mondale campaign. In Kirkland's words, "It's not enough to go to the polls on Election Day to choose among candidates who have been chosen by others. We have to get on at the ground floor of the political process." But the labor bureaucracy is still choosing politicians beholden to the workers' enemy, the capitalist class.

The reasons for the bureaucracy's turn are the defeat of liberal reformism in 1980 and Reagan's attacks on the working

class, which threaten the privileged position of the labor officialdom itself. It's move in part is an attempt to stiffen the backbone of the moderate liberals who have themselves embraced much of Reaganism. As well, the labor chieftains

*continued on page 19*

### — Inside —

"Proletarian Revolution" .....	2
Reagan's Lebanon Debacle .....	3
The Malvinas War Revisited .....	3
The Theory of Permanent Counterrevolution, II ...	4
Is the World Debt Crisis Over? .....	10
Nicaraguan Concessions Bolster Imperialism .....	23
Grenada: An Inquest .....	32

# "Proletarian Revolution"

Starting with this issue we have changed the name of *Socialist Voice* magazine to *Proletarian Revolution*. This change signifies no alteration in the political program of the magazine, or of the League for the Revolutionary Party. It is meant simply to state with greater clarity what our program is.

Words like socialism, communism, Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism, etc. have a checkered history. They all stand for the liberation of humanity from the exploitation and oppression of class society through the struggle and revolution of the working class. Yet they have been adopted — all of them, in one way or another — by politicians and organizations which in reality betray the workers' struggle.

Today the term "socialism" refers to a great variety of different and contradictory things: the socialist revolution that opens the road to the classless communist society; the so-called "socialist" countries (ruled by "communist" parties) that are really a statified form of capitalism; the Socialist (or Social Democratic) parties of Western Europe and elsewhere that seek to hold office in traditional capitalist countries while "representing" the working class; and the various "socialisms" of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois rulers in exploited "third

world" countries where the state plays a dominant, but still capitalist, role.

When we named our journal *Socialist Voice* we had the first of these meanings in mind and rejected all the rest. We were too greatly influenced by our location in the United States, where any name of the "socialist" or "communist" variety broadly signifies opposition to capitalism. Internationally, however, "socialist" is most often understood as reformist. We did not choose "communist" because we did not want to be thought of as Stalinist; nevertheless, we regarded it as more uncompromising, so we used the hammer, sickle and "4" symbol along with our name to denote Trotskyist communism. Now we have come to see the necessity of a clearer distinction from both reformism and Stalinism.

The need for a new name was given immediacy by the fact that, although *our* program has not changed, the left as a whole has shifted markedly to the right over the past decade. In the U.S., formerly subjectively revolutionary New Leftists have now become "practical" academics or social democrats. Both here and abroad, people drawn to Marxism by the working-class upsurges of the late 1960's and early 1970's are now organizers of middle-class protest movements that prick but do not threaten the reign of capitalism. Practically all the pseudo-Trotskyist tendencies (and not these alone) have openly turned to the popular frontism that previously was only implicit in their ideologies.

The content of both "socialist" and "communist" has therefore become linked with even more compromising and mealy-mouthed dogmas than in the past. To sharply distinguish our goals and methods, we chose the name *Proletarian Revolution*. Above all, it re-emphasizes the centrality of the working class and the impossibility of serious reform in this epoch of capitalist decay. Any other interpretation of Marxism obstructs the struggle against capitalism and the transformation to communism. We continue to call ourselves socialists, communists, etc., because the true meaning of these terms must be defended against their abuses and distortions. But for our banner, the name by which people first identify us, the greatest clarity and precision is necessary.

We note that since the name change does not represent a new political program, we are continuing the consecutive numbering that began with *Socialist Voice* No. 1 in 1976. ■

## Key Articles in Back Issues

- No. 1: The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party (on the origins of the LRP).
- No. 2: Capitalism in the Soviet Union (including a polemic against Ernest Mandel's workers' state theory).
- 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.
- No. 6: The Labor Party in the United States; Is Nationalized Property Proletarian?
- No. 7: The Black Struggle: Which Road Today?
- No. 8: Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program "Workers' Government" vs. Workers' State.
- No. 9: Marxism and the Draft; Afghanistan and Pseudo-Trotskyism.
- No. 10: Polish Workers Shake the World.
- No. 11: Iran — Revolution, War and Counterrevolution.
- No. 12: No Shortcuts to Stop Klan; For Socialist Revolution in El Salvador; Church and State vs. Polish Workers.
- No. 13: "Left" Betrays Salvador Revolution; Marxist Response to Reaganism; Poland: Solidarity Forever?
- No. 14: Anti-Reaganism vs. Anti-Capitalism; Spartacist Popular Frontism on El Salvador; Britain's Hot Summer.
- No. 15: Reagan's Russian Dilemma; Polish Workers Under Siege; Labor after Solidarity Day.
- No. 16: How Solidarity Was Defeated; Marxism vs. Reformism — A Test of Theory; Haitians Fight for Freedom
- No. 17: On the Road to Capitalist Crash; Peace Movement Sets Stage for War; Open Letter to ICC; Malvinas War.
- No. 18: LRP Convention Charts Course; Concessions Fightback; Trotskyism vs. Ultra-Leftism; Palestinians.
- No. 19: Black Upsurge Meets Electoral Trap; Karl Marx and the World Crisis; "Democratic Socialism"; Central American Volcano.
- No. 20: Renounce the Imperialist Debt; Democratic Party Disaster for Blacks; Planning and Value in the Soviet Union; The Rape of Grenada; Sri Lanka Report.

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# Reagan's Lebanon Debacle

Fresh from his glorious triumph over a country (Grenada) whose population is four hundredths of one percent that of the U.S., and whose economy is about 25 ten-thousandths of one percent (.000025) the size of ours, Ronald the Conqueror finally met his match. He was driven off of Lebanese soil by another people hostile to imperialist domination. And this time he had the alleged government of the country on his side! Once again the most arrogant imperialists in history have been dealt some of the treatment they deserve.

Reagan showed his true character by withdrawing with viciously bad grace. He expressed his chagrin by ordering the repeated firing of shells into Moslem and Druze villages from Navy ships offshore. An unknown number of deaths thus resulted from the U.S.'s need to save face. This is the real terrorism loose in the present-day world.

The American purpose in Lebanon fully fits the method of its leaving. "Our" side, the Phalangists and the Gemayel government, consists of right-wing thugs embracing a fascist ideology left over from the days of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco. Echoing their 1982 massacre at Sabra and Shatila under Israeli protection, their retreat from the village of Kfar Matta in February revealed another unspeakable crime: dozens of decomposing bodies of murdered Moslem civilians of all ages. Such stellar behavior surely merits the Phalange the continued warm support that Reagan is giving, even after his Marines' forced retreat.

The other side is led by the Druze, Sunni and Shiite Moslem militias. Their leaders are as corrupt, bourgeois and bloody as the Gemayels, but they are propelled by the pressure of the mass hatred of oppressed people against the Phalangists and imperialism. The social upsurge of the largely Shiite Moslem slum dwellers, driven to the city during the oil boom days of the 1970's to find work, takes its religious form because of the absence of any trustworthy working-class leadership. The "socialist" left has capitulated all along to Arab nationalism, and when the Arab rulers unanimously bowed down to U.S. and Israeli imperialism during the latter's 1982 invasion, the left lost its last vestige of credibility.

The Lebanese rebel leaders are momentarily allied to the Assad government of Syria. This regime is known for watching over the massacre of Palestinian refugees at Tel al-Zaatar in 1976, destroying its own city of Hama to crush a Moslem rebellion in 1982, and most recently for bombing two more

refugee camps in Lebanon in order to smash the Arafat wing of the PLO. These are miserable times, when such criminals are the "heroes" of the anti-imperialist struggle.

The setback to U.S. imperialism brings no credit to the U.S. peace movement, which has treated the Middle East like a hot potato. We noted in our last issue that organizations, even left ones, that protest militantly and frequently against U.S. militarism in Central America are passive when it comes to U.S. involvement in Lebanon — which is at least as oppressive and dangerous. The reasons we suggested were 1) the liberals' affection for Zionism, Israel's "civilizing mission" in the region, and 2) the left's inveterate tailing of the Palestinian and Lebanese petty-bourgeois leftists, who continue to compromise the masses' hostility to the imperialist-sponsored regime.

Our assessment has now been confirmed by an unexpected source. The tailist-left *Guardian* newspaper ran an article on February 22 entitled "Some protests, but not enough," mildly criticizing the U.S. left for its inaction over Lebanon. It cited one activist as saying, "It's hard to understand why more isn't happening." Another, Dave McReynolds of the War Resisters League, was more forthright: "A nuclear war is most likely to start in the Middle East, but the peace movement is not able to take it on because much of its membership is divided over the question of Israel."

The reason why a major war could start in the Middle East is that this oil region is critical for the well-being of U.S.-led world imperialism. The peace liberals admire Israel not only because it is Jewish but also because it polices a very dangerous and vital area for the West. Another great test could come soon, for there have already been minor naval incidents in the Persian Gulf between American and Iranian ships, as the Iran-Iraq war heats up.

A "peace movement" that favors peace only when it coincides with the exploitative interests of the most aggressive superpower is no friend of anyone's peace or security. The working class has every interest in repudiating Reagan and all the politicians who, with whatever qualifications, defend the U.S. presence in Lebanon or the Persian Gulf.

## U.S. AND ALL IMPERIALIST FORCES OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST!

# The Malvinas War Revisited

The British *Economist* magazine has revealed in its March 3 edition that the United States played an indispensable role in aiding Britain's military victory over Argentina in the 1982 war for the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands in the South Atlantic. The Pentagon specially outfitted its Ascension Island air force base for British use and diverted vast quantities of war materiel with astounding rapidity. This included 200 Sidewinder missiles, "the most decisive weapon of the campaign." It promised to immediately replace an aircraft carrier if the British lost one. The U.S. also gave the British details of Argentine radar frequencies so that installations could be hit by radar-seeking missiles, told them how to defuse unexploded U.S.-made bombs landing aboard ships, and repositioned a military satellite to supply Britain with 98 percent of its military intelligence on Argentine movements during the war.

All this from a country that was pretending for a time to be an "honest broker" during U.N. negotiations and Secretary of State Haig's "peace mission." And there was a tight censorship

of journalistic coverage, "to prevent the world (and the state department?) knowing the scale of American help."

The reason was the Pentagon's "doubts over Britain's capacity to win a conclusive victory, and concern at the effect this would have on NATO." This confirms what we wrote at the time: "Any threat to the delicate fabric of world stability had to be squashed ... the united front of imperialism was the decisive issue in the war" (*Socialist Voice* No. 17). Since a British victory meant a victory for imperialism as a whole, we concluded that Marxists had no choice but to stand for Britain's defeat.

The new revelations are the final proof that there was a clear-cut imperialist side in the Malvinas War. Those leftist organizations, such as several in Britain described in our article and the International Spartacist Tendency, that refused to campaign for Britain's military defeat by Argentina shamefully betrayed an elementary socialist obligation. ■

# The Theory of Permanent Counterrevolution, Part II

This article continues our critique of the book *The Degenerated Revolution: The Origins and Nature of the Stalinist States* by the British Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group (WP-IWG). Part I (*Socialist Voice* No. 20) demonstrated historically and theoretically how Stalinist planning in the Soviet-type states serves not to overcome the law of value that governs capitalist economy, as the booklet assumes, but to reinforce this law.

Any "workers' state" theory of the Stalinist states in Eastern Europe runs immediately into an immense problem: even though these countries do not on the surface look like traditional capitalist states, they are even farther from any Marxist view of what a workers' state must be. After the Soviet Army conquered the region in World War II, it ruled there together with the Communist Parties (CP's) in Moscow's interest, looting industries, setting up stock companies for Russian exploitation, depriving the masses of all levers of political and economic power. Governments were set up and switched at Moscow's orders, for the sake of whatever political or diplomatic maneuvers Stalin was up to. For us, this means no contradiction, since we regard the capitalist counter-revolution in the USSR to have been completed just before the war; Russia was acting after the war like any conquering imperialist power.

For those who still saw the USSR as a workers' state, distorted and even counterrevolutionary though it might be, the growing resemblance of the new Stalinist states to the USSR in the late 1940's indicated that they too had somehow become proletarian. But this assumption posed new problems, insuperable ones from the point of view of Marxist theory. The sharpest way to pose them is to ask when the Eastern European countries became workers' states. Two possible dates are suggested by the historical events. The Soviet army conquered the region from the retreating Nazi forces in 1944-45, and coalition governments between the petty-bourgeois Stalinist CP's and openly bourgeois parties were formed. But only in 1947-48 were the coalitions dissolved in favor of the one-party CP regimes that claimed to rule in the name of the working class; only then was industry fully nationalized, only then was Soviet-type economic planning introduced. That is, there was a three or four-year delay between the Stalinist military takeovers and the final transformation of Eastern Europe into Stalinist states along the Russian model.

This process, gradual rather than immediate, threw the Fourth International into a state of confusion. At first, the International insisted, correctly, that the states of Eastern Europe could only be capitalist, even though it held that the USSR dominating them was still the workers'. In fact, many capitalists still held their property, and capitalist politicians were participating in the governments (as were several leading fascists and, in the case of Romania, the king!). Most important, no one conceived that the working class had made a revolution; in places where there had been proletarian uprisings upon the defeat of the German army, where workers had seized factories and even formed workers' councils to organize society, the Soviet army and Stalinist forces had crushed them. Throughout the period, the Stalinist forces prevented the workers from challenging capitalist property.

(See *Socialist Voice* No. 10, pages 10-11, for details of these events in Poland.)

Even when the Fourth International held its first post-war international conference in 1948, the analysis did not change — although by this time the CP's had ousted their coalition partners and statified the economies. By this time there were no essential differences in either property relations or property forms between Eastern Europe and the USSR, so the International's position that one was capitalist and the other a degenerated workers' state was internally contradictory and inherently unstable. Shortly after the conference, when Tito's Yugoslavia was kicked out of the Stalinist fraternity, the International abandoned its capitalist analysis of Yugoslavia overnight and the country was declared proletarian, and revolutionary, to boot. This flip-flop, made without even acknowledging the prior position, demonstrates the sharpness of the contradiction that Pabloism had to paper over.

Within a few years, the contradiction was resolved in favor of a worse one: the Eastern European countries were declared to be workers' states, despite the absence of any workers' revolutions. The creation of workers' states (even deformed ones), the social revolution that gives state power to the proletariat — hence the *socialist* revolution — was thereby found to be a task achievable not only by the working class, as Marxists had always believed, but also by the petty-bourgeois Stalinist parties. Marxism was turned upside down.

## The Date Question

In adopting this new, anti-Marxist position the International made no visible attempt to clarify its implications. It did not go back over its previous analysis of East Europe as capitalist both before and after 1948 and correct its "errors." Nor did it try to determine the date when the actual social revolutions, which it had missed at the time, had taken place. For this would have been difficult to do. If the revolutionary moment was 1947-48, then the problem is that the social transformation began and ended with the same state apparatus — since both the armed forces and the state bureaucracy remained unchanged. This directly contradicts the Marxist principle that a given state is an organ of the ruling class, and therefore that the same state apparatus cannot serve first an exploitative ruling class, then participate in this class's overthrow and end up serving its successor, the working class. Even if we accept for the sake of argument the contention that the Stalinist CP's held state power "in trust" for the working class, that still means that class power was transformed peacefully, without a revolution — and without any significant change in the state apparatus.

The Marxist principle thus violated is no abstract moralism, no pure idealist formalism, no whim. It was the conclusion that Marx and Engels reached based on the experience of the Paris Commune and its failure to shatter the previous state machinery — a conclusion so basic that it led them to amend the Communist Manifesto. It has been for over a century the historical demarcation between reform and revolution, a lesson paid for in the blood of millions of workers.

On the other hand, if the date of the revolution is put back to 1944-45 at the time of the Soviet conquest, then the problem is that the Soviet army becomes the agent of "proletarian" revolution at the very moment that it was



crushing the rising movement of the workers' revolt. So the earlier date is even less digestible for anyone trying to retain a fig leaf of proletarian Marxism. Moreover, in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary the Stalinists simply took over the previous state machine, leaving the 1944-45 date with the same inescapable dilemma as 1948. Further, in two regions occupied by the Soviet army, Finland and Eastern Austria, the troops were later withdrawn. If Soviet occupation had in itself meant a proletarian revolution and a workers' state, then it would have to be said that these territories reverted peacefully later on to capitalist states. Such a "peaceful counterrevolution" contradicts the Marxist theory of the state just as badly as does a "peaceful revolution."

In sum, dating the "workers' states" from 1948 amounts to reformism, the idea that socialist transformations can be achieved without revolution. Dating them from 1944-45 leads

consciousness and actions of the advanced workers. It fits perfectly the cheerleading of Stalinism that has characterized the Spartacists in recent years.

The Pabloite dilemma is a problem for Pabloism but not for Marxism. Since the USSR was already capitalist, there is no difficulty in seeing its conquests as capitalist as well. In seizing state power from the Nazi and puppet regimes of Eastern Europe, the Soviets carried out *political* revolutions, changing the *governments* within the framework of continuing capitalist *state* power. It has happened many times in history that one sector of capitalism needed to use force and even revolutionary measures to take over the government from another sector. In the 1940's, the Stalinists first found it useful to govern capitalism in partnership with elements of the old bourgeoisie; later, when pressure from Western imperialism increased and was channeled through the traditional



1945: Russians plant their flag on the Reichstag in Berlin. Hammer and sickle once symbolized the revolutionary workers' state. In post-World War II Europe it was used to crush workers' hopes.

to the same problem as well as the reverse one: "workers' states" becoming capitalist without counterrevolution. No wonder the different wings of Pabloism have had to concoct a never-ending series of rationalizations, each one a little more fanciful. Last year's model, the WP-IWG's, will not be the final one. Efforts to square the circle still continue.

It was left to the Spartacist tendency to cut through all the confusion and rationalization and come up with the essence of Pabloite non-theory: Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1948, the Spartacists claim, had *indeterminate* states (or in some versions *no state* at all) because the governments in power were not firmly committed to either capitalist or socialist economic forms. The idea of a class-independent state, or a non-state, or a class-neutral state in this epoch of revolutionary conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat is a Marxist absurdity. And a factual one as well, for the workers knew perfectly well whose side the states were on — not theirs!

The importance of a theory for Marxists lies in its ability to foresee the general direction of events. But the Spartacists' real indeterminacy is not in the state but in the "theory" which says that things can go either one way or the other. It reduces the question of revolution to the Stalinists' consciousness in choosing which forms to adopt — independent of the con-

capitalists, the Stalinists used their monopoly of force to oust them. This interpretation has the inestimable advantage of conforming with the actual historical events rather than distorting or avoiding living history in order to cram it into a theoretical Procrustean bed.

The WP-IWG book does not face the Pabloite dilemma squarely. It adheres to the majority Pabloite sentiment favoring the later (and usually more ambiguous date), taking the position that the "bureaucratic revolutions" culminated in 1948. But it is indecisive about the Stalinists' transitional partnership period with the old bourgeoisie in 1944-47, and thus echoes the Spartacists' indeterminacy. Labeling it a period of "dual power," at one point the book argues:

"Thus, in the period of dual power, the states in Eastern Europe can be described as still, essentially, capitalist." (page 43)

But a short while later on the book notes that "it is indisputable that the armed power of the bourgeoisie was physically smashed prior to each of the bureaucratic revolutions ..."; namely by the entry of the Soviet army into Eastern Europe in 1944-45. Thus, by the time of the final blow in 1948,

"The essential elements of the smashing of the

bourgeois state had, in fact, already been completed.”  
(page 51)

In the first citation, we are told that the “essential” nature of the states was capitalist because capitalist property had not been abolished. But in the second, we learn that the “essential” capitalist element, armed state power, had previously been smashed. The confusion is striking and not just an accidental misuse of one word. It arises of necessity because the WP-IWG, having first decided that the key criterion for determining a workers’ state must be satisfied economic forms (why else would anyone think even for a minute that these Stalinist monstrosities belonged in any sense to the working class?), then realized that the question of armed state power was fundamental to Marxist theory. So they try both answers, and squirm. To bridge an otherwise blatant discrepancy, they make three attempts to anchor the Pabloite contradiction in Marxist tradition. All involve terminological disguises for political frauds. We will dissect these and then link them to the WP-IWG’s more fundamental errors dealt with in Part I.

### Stalinist-Bourgeois Partnerships

The WP-IWG’s “dual power” interpretation of Eastern Europe in 1944-47 is the first terminological trick. It refers to the fact that the Stalinists held the armed state power while the old bourgeoisie ruled the economy. This “combined” state is defined as bourgeois because the state apparatus, even though it has been taken from the hands of the old bourgeoisie, still defends capitalist economic relations. Correct so far, but why then do they state that “the essential elements” of the bourgeois state had already been smashed? Because the armed power of the *previous* bourgeois states, the ones existing before the Soviet conquest, had been destroyed — and the WP-IWG refuses to say that the *new* armed power is *also* bourgeois. Hence “dual power.”

The term “dual power” was first used by Marxists to analyze the political situation in the 1917 Russian revolution, in the period after the Czar’s downfall in February and before the proletarian revolution in October. There were literally two governments: the Soviets (councils) of workers, soldiers and peasants, and the Provisional Government of the bourgeoisie and its socialist collaborators. The two represented hostile class forces; each controlled armed power; and all political events between February and October reflected the conflict between the two forces. The situation was highly unstable — “anarchic” according to Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution* — and could not last. It ended when the working-class masses ousted their counterrevolutionary bureaucracy (the Mensheviks and SR’s) who were propping up the bourgeois power and took sole power into their own hands.

“Dual power” in Eastern Europe was totally different. There were not two governments and there were not two armed class camps, since the working class had been disarmed. The only common feature was that the situation was unstable — but in the 1940’s the instability was due to the international situation, the changeover from collaboration to rivalry between Stalin’s Russia and the U.S. and its allies. That is why the Stalinist-bourgeois partnership could not last; it was not a question of separate class forces within the countries dividing power between them. Nor was the situation anarchic in any sense: the power that maintained the old bourgeois politicians was the Stalinist army and police; power was singular, not dual. The WP-IWG booklet attempts to suggest by its term that “dual power” in Eastern Europe, ending with the defeat of the old bourgeoisie, must have meant a working-class victory as in the Russian revolution, albeit a deformed one.

But here the Stalinist (read: Menshevik) brokers for the workers were not ousted but instead smashed the workers’ movement. It was a workers’ defeat, not a victory.

The second false terminological analogy attempted by the WP-IWG is that of “bureaucratic workers’ governments.” It likewise is designed to link the Stalinists with the working class. The booklet notes that some of the partnership regimes were popular fronts, that is, collaborations between parties based on the working class (the CP’s, the Socialists) and bourgeois parties. Others, however (the booklet actually names only one: East Germany), kept the openly bourgeois parties out of the coalitions and so were not strictly popular fronts. A different name is needed.

To produce one, the WP-IWG looks back into the history of the Communist International in its revolutionary period and finds the discussion at the Fourth Comintern Congress over workers’ governments. Workers’ governments are governments *in bourgeois states* composed solely of representatives of working-class based parties. The Comintern divided them into two categories. First, the social-democratic or labor-party governments that already existed (or were soon to come into being) in Germany, Australia and England. These were called false workers’ governments.

The second category did not yet exist but was surmised by the Comintern as a possible strategy for revolution. In a revolutionary situation where the Communist Party (at that time still a revolutionary proletarian party) represented only a minority of the proletariat, the CP could demand that the other working-class parties join with it to form a government, based on the workers’ organizations and the workers’ armed power. If such a government came into being, with or without the other parties, through the struggle that would inevitably ensue the non-Communist workers would quickly learn of 1) the violent hostility of the bourgeoisie and 2) the deep-going collaborationist character of the non-Communist workers’ parties. The hoped-for outcome of a workers’ government would be to win the majority of workers to the CP and to unleash a revolutionary struggle for the workers’ state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) and thereby for socialism. (Details of the Comintern proposal are explained in *Socialist Voice* No. 8, pages 20-23.)

The Comintern divided the second category of workers’ governments into three types: workers’ and peasants’ governments, workers’ governments in which the CP is a partner, and workers’ governments of the CP alone. At this point we take up the IWG-WP booklet:

“The Comintern recognized two types of ‘workers’ governments’: ostensible workers’ governments, Liberal and Social Democratic, that were in reality bourgeois governments; and workers’ governments that *could* act as a bridge to the dictatorship of the proletariat. To the three types of the latter category ... the experience after 1945 obliges us to add a fourth type — the bureaucratic workers’ government. In this new type Stalinists are politically dominant. The government has the program of anti-capitalist measures constituting the expropriation of the bourgeoisie whilst simultaneously depriving the working class of *political power*. Thus it prevents the formation or development of organs of proletarian struggle ... with methods which range from political misleadership to outright military repression.” (page 51)

This “fourth type,” which the WP-IWG assert belongs to the second, or revolutionary, category of workers’ government in reality belongs to the first type of counterrevolutionary, bourgeois government — as the WP-IWG description itself



proves. It is not based upon the masses' struggles, but suppresses them; it does not represent the workers' political power, but deprives them of it; it does not lead the masses to revolution, but shoots them if they should try. In no way does it act as a "bridge to the dictatorship of the proletariat." The WP-IWG have invented instead a terminological bridge between revolution and counterrevolution, a blurring of the most vital distinctions.

The purpose of the Comintern discussion and its list of categories was to describe the possible transitory structures so that the working-class masses could learn in practice what their vanguard already knew: that the bureaucratic and aristocratic layers of the working class would not end capitalism, that a class-conscious workers' revolution was necessary. The WP-IWG "category" teaches the exact opposite and undermines the whole conception. It says that counterrevolutionaries (the WP-IWG's term for Stalinists as well as ours) can destroy workers' consciousness, movement and independence — but make the socialist revolution nevertheless.

It is possible, even desirable, to add new categories to Marxist thought. But in this case the WP-IWG to be honest should have framed their contribution as a counterproposal to the Comintern's whole approach rather than as an updating amendment. Indeed, given its content it should be counterposed to all previous Marxist politics. What it cannot do is enlist Lenin's Comintern in the hopeless endeavor of turning counterrevolution into revolution.

### The Bureaucratic Revolution

Throughout the booklet, the Stalinist seizures of power are referred to as "bureaucratic social revolutions," and this is the third attempted fraud. The WP-IWG wants to claim Trotsky's mantle, so they identify the term with him:

**"It was Trotsky himself who witnessed and recorded these things in the first case in which Stalinist expansion was coincidental with a bureaucratic social overturn — Poland and the Baltic states during 1939-40." (page 46)**

But the truth is quite the opposite: the term was used by Trotsky's *opponents* in the decisive faction fight inside the American Socialist Workers Party in 1940 with the bloc led by Max Shachtman. (Shachtman treacherously split the Fourth International at the outbreak of World War II and, after gradually shifting rightward, ended up supporting American imperialism in Vietnam.) Trotsky opposed the very idea that the Stalinist bureaucracy could carry out a social revolution and denounced Shachtman for polemically attributing the term "bureaucratic revolution" to him. Shachtman in contrast liked it so much that he made it the title of his book on Stalinism.

In late 1939 Stalin and Hitler signed a military pact which, among other things, divided Eastern Europe between them. Hitler invaded Poland, defeated the Polish army and occupied half the country. Stalin's troops occupied the other half in addition to the Baltic states; Stalin also embarked on an unsuccessful invasion of Finland.

Trotsky in 1940, relying on reports in the social-democratic press (which he assumed would not be biased in favor of Soviet Russia), wrote that the Stalinist bureaucracy "gives an impulse to the socialist revolution through bureaucratic methods." He had in mind the Mensheviks' accounts that peasants in Eastern Poland, as soon as they heard the news that the Russian army was near, had seized the landlords' land and divided it up. When Shachtman reacted with factional horror at his supposed acceptance of the idea of a

bureaucratic revolution, Trotsky responded:

**"My remark that the Kremlin with its bureaucratic methods gave an impulse to the socialist revolution in Poland, is converted by Shachtman into an assertion that in my opinion a 'bureaucratic revolution' of the proletariat is presumably possible. This is not only incorrect but disloyal. My expression was rigidly limited. It is not the question of 'bureaucratic revolution' but only a bureaucratic impulse. To deny this impulse is to deny reality. The popular masses in western Ukraine and Byelo Russia, in any event, felt this impulse, understood its meaning and used it to accomplish a drastic overturn in property relations." (In *Defense of Marxism*, page 130)**

Trotsky seems to have been factually mistaken to believe that the peasant masses had risen up in Eastern Poland (subsequent accounts do not confirm the Menshevik reports). But that was the only way a Marxist could account for the transformation under the assumption that it was socialist. Trotsky understood the relation between the masses and social revolution, and this prevented him from crediting the "socialist" overturn to the Stalinists. After the Comintern's conscious sellout of the Spanish revolution of the mid-1930's to the bourgeoisie, Trotsky had abandoned his earlier conception that Stalinism was merely a vacillating, conservative brake upon revolutionary progress. "This has acted to fix definitively the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism on the international arena" (*The Spanish Revolution*, page 311). The same point recurs in the Transitional Program of 1938, where he refers to "the definitive passing over of the Comintern to the side of the bourgeois order, its cynically counterrevolutionary role throughout the world ..." Given Trotsky's convictions, had he known that the expropriations were solely the work of the Stalinists and not the masses, he would have had to reassess their "socialist" character.

But even if Trotsky's information on the events of 1939 was correct, the WP-IWG has no business constructing a parallel between his "bureaucratic impulse" and their "bureaucratic revolution." For in the *post-war* Stalinist takeovers, there is no doubt that a) when the workers and peasants sought to seize capitalist property, the Stalinists discouraged and prevented them; b) when the Stalinists finally decided to nationalize property, they had already made sure that the working class's initiative was smashed. Here the bureaucratic takeovers were made not at all by the masses, only by the bureaucracy, as the WP-IWG recognizes. Trotsky's "socialist" interpretation, wrong or right in 1939, was unquestionably inapplicable in 1947-48.

At a later point in the book the WP-IWG admits almost offhandedly that its view of the "bureaucratic social revolution" is not Trotsky's. They criticize the Fourth Internationalist Germain (the pseudonym of Ernest Mandel at the time) for his suggestion in 1947 that the Eastern European Stalinist states might be absorbed into the USSR itself and thereby have their class structure and property socially transformed:

**"Germain, dogmatically clinging to Trotsky's analysis of the pre-war bureaucratic social overturn in Eastern Poland, insisted on maintaining that the condition for 'structural assimilation' was the independent intervention of the masses." (page 87)**

That is, Germain, following Trotsky, did not believe that a purely bureaucratic social revolution was possible. Mandel made a wrong prediction, based on combining Trotsky's correct understanding (that social overturns require mass proletarian action) with a false assumption (that the USSR

was still a workers' state). For the WP-IWG, it is Trotsky's method and not Mandel's assumption (which they share) that is "dogmatic." Thus the WP-IWG's claim to be developing the method of Trotsky, like that of the Bolsheviks and the early Comintern, turns out to be less than accurate.

The difference in all three cases — "dual power," the "bureaucratic workers' government," and the bureaucratic revolution — is that the WP-IWG is willing to replace mass proletarian action by Stalinist bureaucratic action for the task of abolishing capitalism. Let us not be misunderstood: the WP-IWG comrades are not devotees of Stalinism. Quite the contrary — they abhor it. They want to deny that the rotten, degenerate "workers' states" have anything to do with the workers themselves. So they criticize those Pabloites who invent "mass pressure" behind the bureaucratic takeovers and otherwise tail Stalinism (including its Titoist, Maoist and Fidelista forms). But they are consequently forced to defend

possible for a bourgeois *political* revolution to be counterrevolutionary; one sector of the bourgeoisie (e.g., the Stalinists) could seize power in order to forestall a workers' social revolution. But to say that a proletarian socialist revolution (however Stalinistically deformed) is counterrevolutionary is to speak nonsense. The very purpose of a socialist revolution is to replace the capitalist state by a workers' state. If the Stalinists can do this, if they can create a state which, despite the suppression of the actual workers, can carry out the fundamental tasks of a workers' state — then their revolution is not counterrevolutionary at all. Nasty maybe, even criminally murderous — but still a step forward for humanity.

The WP-IWG would have to answer that the Stalinist states do not carry out all the fundamental tasks of a workers' state. They are, after all, only "degenerate." Yes, they eliminate capitalism — but they are an "obstacle" blocking the road to



*Budapest 1956: The Hungarian revolution shattered Stalinist tanks. To achieve success it had to shatter Stalinist state.*

the idea of "workers' states" independent of the working class. And so they produce an even more naked theory of the revolutionary capacities of Stalinism. By dissociating Stalinism from the working class while still associating social progress with Stalinism, they end up separating progress from the working class.

### Counterrevolutionary Revolution

One passage in the book sums up the WP-IWG's ambivalent anti-Stalinism perfectly:

"Wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes, Stalinist bureaucratic social revolutions are counterrevolutionary. They are carried through *against* the prevailing level of consciousness of the forces necessary for the proletarian revolution in the country — i.e., the working class. They occur on the basis of a bureaucratic-repressive limitation of independent action of the working class and therefore devalue the very notion of 'revolution', 'socialism', 'workers' state' and the planned economy in the eyes of the oppressed masses. They retard the development of a revolutionary consciousness within the world proletariat. They create a congenitally bureaucratized state in which the working class is politically expropriated. The bureaucratic regimes represent an obstacle in the path of the world working class in the struggle for socialism and communism." (page 46)

We have here the Pabloite dilemma in a nutshell: "counterrevolutionary revolutions." It sounds like a world-class contradiction, and it is; the two words on paper together almost erase themselves. But it is not quite so simple. It is

communism. They are not transitional societies between capitalism and communism, as Marxists have always believed of workers' states, but rather intermediary forms progressive in comparison to capitalism but reactionary in comparison to real workers' states. Such a theory is meant to counter the standard Pabloite view that Stalinism is a "blunted instrument" retarding social progress without preventing it. This theory is really a new version of an old one.

There is one interpretation of the "counterrevolutionary social revolution" that is not internally contradictory (its contradiction is external, with living history, but that is a different matter). If we assume that the Stalinist victory results in something that is not a transitional workers' state, not a capitalist state, but a third form of society — then we have indeed a social revolution (it changes the ruling class) which is counterrevolutionary (it blocks the workers' revolution). Max Shachtman developed such a theory out of his conflict with Trotsky (see *Socialist Voice* No. 1), and it is not by accident that similar ideas are heard on the left and in pseudo-Marxist academic circles. Although the WP-IWG booklet confronts several rival workers' state theories and one state capitalist theory, it does not take on any of these bureaucratic collectivist, third camp, third force, etc. positions — not even Shachtman's, which played such a prominent role in Trotsky's defense of his analysis of Stalinism. We believe and will show that the WP-IWG's theory is closer to Shachtmanism than they would like to think.

The WP-IWG have invented a whole new category, undreamt-of by Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and even Pablo, and only tentatively approached by Mandel: the non-transitional workers' state. This is a "workers' state" in which the transition



to socialism has been definitively, almost permanently, blocked. The theme runs throughout the book from beginning to end. The only reason given for the blockage is Stalinism's incapacity to expand the productive forces qualitatively: "... it does not enable those economies to create the material base necessary for socialism" (page 92). Marx's *definition* of the workers' state as a transitional society is quoted, but the contradiction is never dealt with. Not surprisingly: the "non-transitional transitional society" is just as impossible a concept as the "counterrevolutionary social revolution."

Trotsky's authority is alleged for the blocked workers' state, but his view was distinctly different. Trotsky died (in 1940) believing that capitalism had not been restored in the USSR, mistakenly from our point of view. But he never envisaged the degenerating workers' state as a lasting phenomenon, and therefore never created new theoretical categories to explain it. He evolved a theory of the workers' state and its degeneration — a process; he did not have a special theory of degenerated workers' states — a fixed category. And as the Stalinist counterrevolution deepened his characterization changed. In the last years of his life he stepped up his warning of the danger of the bureaucracy restoring capitalism. The Transitional Program contains two such passages:

"Either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism."

"Each day added to its domination helps rot the foundations of the socialist elements of the economy and increases the chances for capitalist restoration."

That is, he saw the bureaucracy actively leading the USSR backward on the road from capitalism to socialism. He even used the term "counterrevolutionary workers' state" — but this jarring category, unlike the WP-IWG's inventions, was a momentary reality. For Trotsky its temporariness was undeniable:

"A totalitarian regime, whether of Stalinist or fascist type, by its very essence can only be a temporary transitional regime. ... Severe crisis cannot be a permanent condition of society." (*In Defense of Marxism*, page 13)

The coming World War II was about to settle the question of revolution or counterrevolution once and for all. Any scheme of forty years of degenerated workers' states was out of the question.

The WP-IWG cannot cope with Trotsky's warnings. In their introduction they speak of the "clear incorrectness of Trotsky's perspective"; later on (page 38) they make a slithery attempt to align it with their own:

"Taken as a strategic prognosis, Trotsky's formulations retain their validity. The reactionary, utopian policy of 'detente' practiced by Stalinism in the USSR will lead, inevitably, to the destruction of the collectivized property relations should the working class not first come to the rescue. This *undeniable tendency* toward the destruction of Stalinism was, however, offset during the course of the Second World War, by a set of *conjunctural* factors which Trotsky did not, and in some cases, could not anticipate."

This is about as feeble as can be. First of all, the Second World War is long over, and "conjunctural factors" forty years ago do not account for the supposed absence of counterrevolution in the USSR ever since then. Secondly, exiling Trotsky's warnings to the international arena (detente) is a

misrepresentation: he specifically described restorationist tendencies within Stalinist society and within the bureaucracy itself. Indeed, it was not the "destruction of Stalinism" that Trotsky foresaw but the bureaucracy's active fostering of an exploiting class made up in part out of itself. When Trotsky said Stalinism was counterrevolutionary, he meant it.

The one true element in the WP-IWG statement is that Trotsky saw the counterrevolutionary transformation as an immediate danger, while they treat it as a long-term, painfully slow, effectively permanent process. This perspective contradicts reality as well as theory. Thus, they assert that "Only ruthless terror and the atomization of society can maintain the Stalinist bureaucracy in power" (page 31). This was certainly true in the 1930's but has not been the case since Stalin's death; it is particularly untrue of popular anti-imperialist Stalinists like Castro. Similarly, they accept Trotsky's characterization of Stalinism in 1935 as "Bonapartism," a form of authoritarian rule that uses police methods to balance between contending social forces. They even quote Trotsky's famous image: "Bonapartism, by its very essence, cannot long maintain itself; a sphere balanced on the point of a pyramid must invariably roll down on one side or the other." But if Stalinism is still Bonapartism, their sphere has been stuck in place for five decades.

### Non-Transitional Transition

"A workers' state within which the transition to socialism is blocked," summarizes the WP-IWG, "must prove a highly unstable and contradictory phenomenon" (page 31). Indeed it must, and a temporary one too. But the Stalinist state consolidated during the Great Purge has been neither temporary nor outstandingly unstable. The reason is that it is no longer terrorist, Bonapartist — or a workers' state. The violent re-establishment of capitalism stabilized the terrific tension between workers' property and bureaucratic rule, confirming Trotsky's prognosis in a way he did not recognize. Today Stalinist society suffers the exacerbated contradictions of decaying capitalism but not the terror of a permanently mobilized internal counterrevolution.

The WP-IWG buttresses its absurd semi-permanent non-transitional transitional state position by the assumption that Stalinism abolished the law of value. If the laws of capitalist production have already been abolished and transcended by a higher mode, what transition is left to be accomplished? All that remains to be done is to clear out the capitalist norms of distribution together with the superstructural crimes (like terrorism) that accompany them — but the new mode of production has been reached. That is, in its essential aspect the transition to socialism is "blocked" only because it is already achieved!

The WP-IWG has made a singular contribution to Pabloism as a whole by demonstrating the pseudo-Marxist basis of its theoretical assumptions and making the logic of its positions clear. What we have is a story of long-lasting societies with a socialist mode of production, capitalist norms of distribution, and a parasitic bureaucracy whose self-interests prevent the final transition to genuine socialism. The "political revolution" the Pabloites call for would supposedly establish not a transitional workers' state but full-fledged socialism itself. This accounts for the traditional Pabloite theme (shared with Shachtmanism) of confining their slogans to reformist democratic demands and leaving the mode of production untouched.

The Pabloite conception is a genuine "third camp" theory, one that envisages a new form of society mired between capitalism and communism, less progressive than the latter,

more progressive than the former. It is better than capitalism, so the Pabloites defend it; it is worse than communism, so they upbraid it for its inequality and lack of democracy. But it is a fiction. It exists only in imagination, or in the twisted hopes of would-be Marxists searching for something to salvage out of the immense defeats Stalinism inflicted on the working class. Even this variant of third-campism was first invented by Shachtman, whose "bureaucratic collectivism" was at first also thought to be more progressive than capitalism. Of the variety of such intermediate third camp theories on the market today, most at least have the virtue of not naming these deformed conceptions after the workers.

### Capitulation to Reformism

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution concluded that bourgeois revolutions in the modern epoch were not enough. Only the proletarian revolution was capable of fulfilling not just its proper task of the transition to communism but also the democratic tasks that the bourgeoisie has reneged on under imperialism. The Pabloite epigones have reversed this theory, claiming that bourgeois revolutionists (Stalinists mainly, but other nationalists as well) can fulfill not only bourgeois tasks but also the proletarian task of overthrowing capitalism.

For those who see the Stalinist "workers' states" still advancing toward socialism, there is no contradiction except with reality; they have simply chosen the nationalist bourgeoisie as the class they adhere to. But others like the WP-IWG who reject Stalinism have painted themselves into a hopeless corner. The march of human progress has been

derailed into their third form of society, which cannot advance. Moreover, if capitalist laws of motion do not apply, the workers' revolution they call for can be only a question of will, not material necessity. There may be repeated uprisings like the slave revolts of past societies, but there is no inherent crisis of the system (like that which Marx discovered for capitalism) that compels the revolt to take the road of socialist revolution and workers' rule. Similar conclusions led Max Shachtman over the years to abandon hope for communism and adapt his politics first to social-democratic reformism and then to imperialism outright. And that is the real meaning, the real danger in the Pabloite-Shachtmanite theory of permanent counterrevolution. The WP-IWG comrades are not about to enlist in support of Stalinism, which is in any case losing popularity generally. But reformism is a different matter, and it has been gaining ground among discouraged leftists in Europe and the U.S.

The WP-IWG have already made significant concessions. We refer readers to our polemics against Workers Power, "For a General Strike in Britain" in *Socialist Voice* No. 9, and against the Irish Workers Group in Nos. 14 and 19. In both cases the underlying capitulation is that petty-bourgeois reformists (Labour and trade union leaders in Britain, nationalists in Ireland), rotten though their politics are, are seen in the last analysis as progressive leaderships for the working class. All the theorizing about Stalinism as counterrevolutionary but nevertheless progressive is, in reality, just a reflection of their parallel understanding of the counterrevolutionary leaders the working classes face at home. ■

## Is the World Debt Crisis Over?

In economics more than any other field, nonsense is catching. President Reagan began a giddy week on February 1 by sending a budget message to Congress that 1) denounced deficit spending but continued his unprecedented run of record deficits; 2) took credit for the economic "improvement" of slashing social welfare programs by \$40 billion in three years, at the same time that 3) his huge military expenditures had created budget deficits that forced a \$47 billion increase in federal interest payments, more than wiping out the saving; and 4) assumed "sustained expansion" of the U.S. economy as a "new springtime of hope for America," as if capitalist upturns and the seasons were not cyclical events. Inspired by this, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisers went to Congress, alternately denouncing opposing sections of the president's report, which they both hailed. To top the week off, leaders of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank announced on February 6 that the world debt crisis seemed to be at an end, just after they had reported that "third world" debt climbed from \$609 billion to \$810 billion during 1983, a 33 percent rise.

What is going on here? Is it just a little matter of the president gearing up for an election campaign and therefore painting in rosy colors, as noted by some Democratic Party-oriented bourgeois journalists (as opposed to those who swallow Reagan's rhetoric)? But then why do the international bankers go along? And why don't the opposition politicians get genuinely angry at Reagan's flim-flam, especially since his "improvements" — increased unemployment and public service cuts — have meant misery for millions? The reason is that bourgeois economic thinking relies heavily on perceptions of reality, as much as on reality itself. If we think things are looking up, investment will be encouraged and things actually

will look up. Optimism is supposed to be self-fulfilling. If only it were so.

Unfortunately, seriousness is called for. Some people, especially in the U.S., which is far wealthier than most of the world, may believe that prosperity has been assured. But on other continents economies are faltering and mass protests are mounting day by day. The fact that we are now in a cyclical upturn is a cause not for rejoicing but for the sober reflection that this is the best that present-day capitalism can do.

The shallow upturn is due to three basic causes. First is the cyclical character of capitalism itself. Crises of overproduction bring about slumps, investment cutbacks, layoffs and business failures; these in turn enable the surviving businesses to rehire some workers, buy up equipment cheaply and recoup profits; it is the prelude to a boom and finally to a renewed crisis. And this upturn looks far more dramatic than it is because it comes after a severe downturn in 1981 and 1982.

Secondly, there is the vast budget deficit due to massive government spending, primarily for military purposes. In effect the government prints money that is not backed up by real production. Such a policy might pay off if it built new productive capacity and put people and resources to work. The products of military industry, however, do not re-enter the circuit of production. But the capitalists who buy the government's debt are still entitled to a share of surplus-value, to which military goods make no contribution. So Reagan's stimulation of the economy through military spending means a temporary shot in the arm now but an additional burden for years to come, both as a drain on productive and social investment and as a new source of inflation.

The third cause explains why the present upturn has managed to last for over a year, unlike the most recent previous ones: it is the shameful capitulation of the labor



unions to the capitalists' concessions drive. Wage increases are well behind inflation, and for the first time in memory wage gains of non-union workers exceeded those of unionists. What an incredible commentary on the "practical" outlook of the miserable labor officials, who have surrendered so much of what people fought so hard for and died to win! The abject refusal of the trade union bureaucracy to lead a struggle against vicious anti-working class attacks has allowed the inflationary pressure of Reagan's policies to be reduced, thus sustaining the upturn for the rich at the expense of the workers.

The rest of the world shows little sign of this paper upturn; indeed, much of it is paying for the unequal prosperity in the U.S. (The decline in inflation in particular is largely imported; the over-valued U.S. dollar means that imported goods are cheaper than they otherwise would be.) The West European economies are still weak, partly because workers there have not permitted the kind of concessions that are now common in the U.S. and also because the ballooning of fictitious capital in the U.S. has attracted funds over the Atlantic. As well, the imperialist debt burden is still the chief economic concern of the majority of exploited ("third world") countries. Their debts increased enormously in the past decade because of the recession in the West (forcing bankers to look elsewhere to place loans) and the sharp rise in interest rates.

Pressure to repudiate the debts owed to banks and governments in the imperialist countries is rising. Much of the debt was contracted by repressive regimes using it to arm themselves against their people, as with former dictator Somoza of Nicaragua. A good portion was simply salted away in private bank accounts, as in the notorious case of President Mobutu of Zaire. Some of it was spent on prestige investment projects which fell apart when the prices of materials and parts that had to be imported rose drastically with inflation, as in the case of Poland's debt. More went for imports of luxury goods. So it is understandable that working people reject paying for the debt burden when the borrowed funds were put to no good purpose.

### Capitalists Will Talk, Not Act

Last fall, the Bolivian central workers' council, the COB, demanded that the country's foreign debt payments be stopped. In Argentina, the newly elected bourgeois president, Raul Alfonsin, campaigned on the promise that he would pay only the "legitimate" portion of the \$44 billion debt; now his experts' confidential report suggests that "40 to 50 percent of the private external debt is fictitious," meaning private swindles dumped on the state (*Latin America Weekly Report*, January 13). A Latin American economic conference was held in Quito, Ecuador, in early January to search for a consensus on debt policy. Rumors of a debtors' cartel were rampant, but none emerged. Debt repudiation, a revolutionary demand dating back to the Bolshevik revolution and the early days of the Communist International, is certain to be the subject of talk, not action, by the bourgeois nationalist rulers. As we wrote in the last issue of *Socialist Voice*:

**"Local and national bourgeoisies cannot survive independent of 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. ... A capitalist cartel depends on a monopoly of production and strength to succeed; it cannot win on the basis of common weakness."**

Now that the Latin American countries have failed to agree on firm common actions, is there any basis for the IMF's declaration that the crisis has ended? A simple analysis shows how unlikely this is. The "developing" countries' debt is over \$800 billion. Assume that rates of interest are about 10 percent; they are often more. If we consider only interest and overlook repayment of principal, the average yearly payment to the lending countries would be at least \$80 billion. To pay this amount, the exploited countries would have to run a trade surplus at least as large with the industrial countries — but most of them have a trade deficit — precisely because they are "underdeveloped." If the problem were confined to a handful of countries having to reverse their trade deficits, it might be solvable at the expense of the masses. But a world in which many exploited countries enjoy a large trade surplus is obviously impossible.

### Workers' Campaign Needed

The solutions so far worked out by the IMF have just been patchworks of rescheduling for those countries, like Poland, Mexico and the Philippines, that have already declared their inability to pay. But the IMF imposes onerous terms that cripple wages and public services. If the working classes permit this to continue, they will just see their standards of living eaten away below already desperate levels. A concerted working-class campaign to demand repudiation of the imperialist debts is absolutely necessary, to make sure that the heavy burden of the capitalists' crisis does not crush the workers and peasants. The principle must be: the workers shall not pay for the crisis. If such a campaign undermines the stability of international capitalist finance (as it surely would), so be it.

We note with anger that the reformist and centrist left is now leading workers into the electoral swamp in "third world" countries, as it has long done in Europe and North America. The so-called socialists might at least raise the issue of debt repudiation in their chosen electoral work. We predict that if they do it will be in the form of the nebulous debtors' cartel of the petty-bourgeois nationalists, because the reformist electoral thrust is to make peace with capitalist property relations, not overthrow them.

The LRP has urged several far-left tendencies around the world to actively propagandize for a debt repudiation campaign. The great majority of fake socialist and communist organizations shun any mention of the old revolutionary demand, for that would weaken not only world imperialism but their own favorite "socialist" ruling classes as well. Genuine communists have no such private interests to defend. We stand in every country with the exploited masses against their rulers, however "progressive" and "revolutionary" they declare themselves to be.

Our proposal takes on an added significance given the recent announcements that Western banks are resuming loans to the countries of Eastern Europe after the stoppage following the Polish events of 1980-81. The reason is that these so-called socialist states have succeeded in policing mass resistance to the cutbacks that made it possible for them to keep up their debt payments. Leftists who consider these countries in some way progressive or proletarian ought to demand that their rulers take the lead in breaking the banks' stranglehold. The debt crisis is the surest evidence that East European and "third world" rulers have much more in common with the imperialist financiers than with their own people.

**REPUDIATE THE IMPERIALIST DEBT!**

# Left and Democrats

*continued from page 1*

will inevitably meet up with older generations of ex-socialistic types like Bayard Rustin and "Fritz" Mondale himself; for the new road is actually an old and well-worn one-way street.

## Does Jackson's Program Matter?

The Jacksonian left is not supporting their man because of the stellar qualities of his political program. On the contrary, Jackson is so clearly a defender of capitalism that it is no simple task to costume him for the role of hero. Thus the CP simply ignores his pro-capitalist views. The *Guardian* delicately comments that "his views on a number of issues leave something to be desired." All agree with the CWP's *Workers Viewpoint*, which claimed that opponents of Jackson's campaign who "grumble over Jackson's non-socialist platform miss the point." The point is that Jackson is supposedly arousing mass movements, notably the black movement. When a hero does that, who can resist?

Michael Harrington, leader of DSA, made it even more explicit in a Convention resolution: "We cannot, of course, approve the programmatic content of Jackson's past positions which fall far short of what is needed, and sometimes (!) have suggested (!) that there is a 'black capitalist' solution to poverty and economic crisis. But we are very much impressed by the movement that is building up behind Jackson as a candidate..."

To round out the picture, Sam Marcy, high potentate of the WWP, pontificates: "Notwithstanding the fact that he continually promotes a left-liberal line on most fundamental political questions which does not distinguish him very much from other liberals such as George McGovern, Gary Hart or Alan Cranston, it is very plain that they are all part and parcel of the capitalist establishment which Jackson is running against." What makes it so evident that Jackson is not part and parcel of this establishment? "The fundamental difference... is that Jackson is leading a movement."

The left's arguments on the question of Jackson's pro-capitalist position can be summed up in two words: ignore it. Only the movement he is initiating is important. Nevertheless, it is instructive to look at what Jackson's views of his role in the capitalist system and its electoral process actually are — to see precisely where Jackson is leading his followers. Jackson is widely known for his demagoguery but is really far more forthright than many left leaders. He has repeatedly made clear that he intends to be a broker for the black masses and others who shelter under his "rainbow coalition." "A credible campaign," he said, "would give blacks much-needed bargaining power. Bargainers without bases are beggars, not brokers." He noted that "the Democratic Party has litmus tests it must pass. It cannot receive investments without promising dividends and returns."

This program cannot be ignored — because it is the very program that black working people who support Jackson agree with. Indeed, those blacks who support the black politicians in Mondale's camp have the same outlook; they disagree merely over how to maximize the returns from brokering within the system. To dismiss Jackson's proclaimed intent on such questions is to dismiss in reality the current views of the black working class.

In our opinion these views — that real gains are possible under present-day capitalism, through the Democratic Party — are very wrong. But they must be contended with. What

black workers think is critically important, especially for those who claim to believe that working-class consciousness is the key to the socialist transformation of society.

Another point: historically Marxists have understood why the masses of working people turned to religion for solace from the miseries of daily life. Communists have always tried to collaborate with religious fellow-workers in battles against the exploiters; the two agreed to disagree in order to further the struggle. But the same heritage teaches us the need for an unyielding criticism of organized religious leaders who seek to maintain superstition's grip on their "flock" and inevitably betray them to the ruling classes. Today's left utters not a peep about the fundamentalist harangues of the Baptist clergyman, the Reverend Jesse Jackson. They consider *themselves* too sophisticated for such pap, but they have no quarrel with letting Jackson do the "necessary" dirty work.

## Does the Democratic Party Matter?

Central to Jackson's campaign is the goal of using his mass support among blacks to build the Democratic Party. Thus he has said:

**"I'm running because there are more people locked out of the Democratic party who are its natural constituents than are locked into it. ... So I'm running to defend the poor and make welcome the outcasts and to deliver those votes that are stuck at the bottom. I think that is the salvation of the Democratic party, the democratic process, and for the soul of America."** (*New York* magazine, January 9.)

Genuine communists know that the Democratic and Republican parties are both capitalist parties, enemies of the working class, black and white. They are parties of racism, unemployment, depression and war. But since the 1920's when blacks began to switch from "the party of Lincoln," blacks have had a different estimate of the Democrats. And not without reason.

The Republican Party openly represents big business. The Democrats represent the more liberal bourgeoisie and therefore can claim to reflect the interests of workers and minorities as well. For example, in the 1930's with the huge explosion of industrial unionism and in the 1960's with the black upheaval, the Democrats were forced to yield some reforms, lest the mass struggles threaten the capitalist system itself. The Democratic Party was never the source of these popular gains; votes were never the weapon that won them. But the Democratic Party was the channel through which gains won in struggle were grudgingly distributed. And voting power within the party did affect the apportionment of the concessions disbursed.

The price that the black and white masses paid for these benefits was pacification and the incorporation of their struggles. The party machines and the network of bureaucracies and agencies of the welfare state were the byways and mazes that people were forced to traverse in order to get the gains they had won. The Democratic Party has always been an institution designed to divert struggles against the system and divide them up into small sectors so that eventually the system can take away the gains it can no longer afford. Thus the Democratic Party is not a way-station for a movement but a diversion, in fact a graveyard.

As long as black assertiveness is confined to the Democratic Party, there will always be a racist reaction and the blacks will be doomed to lose. The bourgeoisie and its politicians will always favor their white pawns at the expense of blacks. Even in past times of relative prosperity, capitalism denied blacks equality; now it is out of the question. When black politicians



make very limited demands for blacks — as in Detroit, Atlanta and Philadelphia — there is no big problem for the moment. But when there are mass mobilizations with real demands, as in Chicago's election of Mayor Washington last year, no matter how much the Washingtons equivocate there will always be Vrdolyaks available to whip up racist reaction.

### The Left and the Democrats

Part of Jackson's attraction for the left is his "rainbow coalition" idea, a unification of the dispossessed inside the Democratic Party. By pressure of voting strength inside and potential for movement outside the electoral arena it hopes to compel concessions out of the system. But such alliances are traditional within the Democratic Party. Not being class conscious, they are alliances based upon loyalty to a particular sector and aimed at combining divergent class interests within each sector. Under capitalism such pacts always break down, even more readily than do cartels and trusts among the capitalists themselves. If the system can offer one group in the alliance something at the expense of the others, then the deal is off.

When Jesse Jackson invites working-class people into the Democratic Party, when he promises that if you support it you will get a piece of the pie, do the Jacksonian leftists warn against this? Do they point out that tying a movement to the Democrats can only cripple it? No. Not a word. There is not even a hint of the line that might say, "We support Jackson, but the Democratic Party trap will kill his movement." Even those leftists who think of themselves as too pure to join the Party (yet) believe it vital to begin there. Again, let Jesse do the dirty work.

The DSA, on the other hand, echoes Jackson's invitation in slightly more leftist terms: "So for now, at least, American social movements have their electoral expression within the Democratic Party. Whether the party will someday be transformed in a more left direction by this activity, or whether progressive forces will have to leave en masse to form a new party, is impossible to foresee. But today the Democratic Party is where the action is." (*Democratic Left*, November-December 1983.)

Similarly but more nastily, the CWP's Phil Thompson also invites the unwary into the Democratic Party trap: "The person who stands on the sidewalk with their merry band of ten followers are not revolutionaries. The real revolutionaries are people willing to go into the Democratic Party, the bourgeoisie's turf, and put their politics out to the millions..." (*Workers Viewpoint*, December 14.) Yet for all its unwillingness about standing on the sidewalk and all its eagerness to jump into the bourgeois gutter, the CWP is encumbered by its radical past and doesn't want to get its feet too wet. It still says that "workers, Blacks and other oppressed people in the U.S. will gain nothing if Mondale beats Reagan. We will lose nothing if Reagan beats Mondale." (*Workers Viewpoint*, December 21.) In its own terms, the CWP will then be joining us on the "sidewalk."

However, the CWP is able to talk left like this only because it isn't ready to admit what the CP, the DSA, Jesse Jackson, most blacks and almost everybody else knows: after Jackson loses the Democratic nomination he will endorse the party candidate, Mondale or some facsimile thereof. And the CWP will very likely follow the logic of its "revolutionary" street-walking and join the more experienced leftists in the Democratic camp — if not this year, then next time.

The DSA will be delighted to be able to endorse "labor's candidate." After all, Harrington still justifies his support to Lyndon Johnson in 1964 with the "vote for Johnson to stop

Goldwater and prevent a war in Vietnam" line. Now as then, the social democrats find it useful to fib a little about their candidate. Harrington delicately put it in his Convention report, "Like all the other announced candidates, Mondale's program leaves much to be desired (!) and does not address (!) the urgency of democratizing basic investment decisions." That's why Marxists call the capitalists the ruling class, Mike, remember? According to another DSA Convention report, "At the center of the Democratic Party is Walter Mondale and his 'corporatist' proposals to bring business, labor and the state together in a 'new social contract'...Mondale certainly has more than a little of the Cold Warrior in him..." More than a little indeed, but this will prove no hindrance to DSA's endorsement.

The CP's *Daily World* has been promoting Jackson. If it hasn't actually endorsed him that's because it too has friends in the labor bureaucracy who are committed to Mondale. Since Mondale is more than a little bit of a Cold Warrior, the *Daily World* criticizes him a little bit but not more. After all, the CP's main theme is "Dump Reagan." Reagan, not capitalism, is the source of problems like war, unemployment, racism, etc., a line well calculated to convince anyone who never heard of Jimmy Carter or Lyndon Johnson. Of course, when the CP backs the Democrats against Reagan it will be done in vintage Stalinist style: the CP will run its own candidates who will speak boldly for stopping Reagan above all, i.e., for voting Democratic.

The Workers World Party may follow the same tack, and it too has its own "anti-Reagan" candidates ready. But given its Trotskyist origins (well hidden and well past), the WWP tries a little harder to maintain an independent stance. But not much: it too has constantly identified Reagan as the source of capitalism's evils; and even if it hesitates to call openly for a vote for Any Democrat, its periphery will have been trained to do exactly that.

### What about a Third Party?

The WWP has one difference with the CP: it has announced that it will support Jackson and withdraw its own candidates if he runs a third-party campaign. Another outfit with the same line is the New Alliance Party, which specializes in denouncing the Democratic Party while working actively inside it. Thus it backs Jackson inside while running its own candidate outside: "It's what we call an insurance policy in case Jesse doesn't get picked by the Democrats and some folks in the Rainbow Coalition seek to deliver the Rainbow's clout to the Democratic Party bosses." (*National Alliance*, February 20.) This "policy" overlooks the evident fact that one of the "folks" planning a deal with the party bosses is Jesse himself.

As already noted, Jackson is clearly not going to run independently. What he will do is make the mildest possible bargaining statements to warn the Democrats not to take blacks for granted. He did this last time around, trying to threaten Jimmy Carter that "the idea that blacks won't vote for a Republican is inaccurate." (*New York Times*, July 22, 1980.)

No one took him seriously then, and now that he is heavily involved in the electoral game he is taking even fewer chances. This time he said, "I have absolutely no fear of blacks' being so destabilized by the possibility of a loss at one level that they will not be able to adjust to the reality of the general election." (*New York Times*, November 2, 1983.) As well, "I'm inclined to expand the party, not break with the party." (*New York Times*, January 9.) He is promising that he and his base are loyal and safe.

In fact, Jackson's loyalty pledges have gone so far as to draw

Sam Marcy's criticism — but not of Jackson. "It is all well and good for certain leftists who are looking for an excuse not to support Jackson to avail themselves of his many utterances about how we are all one party, we are all Democrats, we are for unity, and so on and so forth. But this kind of jargon is part of the form of struggle. Whether it is of good coin or not matters little. It is the objective dynamics of the struggle which are decisive." (*Workers World*, February 2.)

Yes, the struggle is what matters. But Jackson's words, and those of all his leading lieutenants and followers, influence the struggle. Black workers are not cattle, driven by cowboy leaders or simply by elemental forces. They take their politics seriously, and when someone who presently commands their allegiance urges them to be loyal Democrats this has its effect. Socialists concerned about workers' views would decry what Jackson says and argue against him. Whereas Marcy and the



Jesse Jackson in New Hampshire synagogue to apologize for "Hymie" remarks. Barry Commoner, on left, was 1980 "independent third party" candidate.

rest who ignore Jackson's message in favor of other "objective dynamics" are demonstrating only their contempt for the masses.

The companion myth to the idea of a successful black movement through the Democratic Party is that a successful coalition of movements of the oppressed can also flourish there. The rainbow coalition exists, but "somewhere over the rainbow, way up high," not at the base, not in reality. It is already clear that Jackson's campaign attracts far more votes in the liberal middle class (aside from blacks) than it does among working-class women, Latinos and others in the alleged rainbow. Jackson has endorsements from the younger, less entrenched middle-class organizers and brokers of his projected alliance, but he does not have the support of their constituencies in the streets and the factories. Tragically, at this level capitalism is driving more and more poor white, Latin and black workers into rivalry for jobs and benefits, while the politicians at the top sing their songs of Oz and other fairy tales.

### The Anti-Jackson Left

Communists have always been willing to give critical support to candidates with whom they had fundamental disagreements. The central condition for such support was that the candidate reflect an independent working-class movement against the capitalist class. Lenin aptly compared this type of support to "a rope supporting a hanged man." The real support is to the masses in struggle; the candidate is supported only because the workers see him or her as their answer. Marxists attempt to break the false leaders' hold on

the masses by openly contrasting our program and strategy to theirs. We seek to show that revolutionaries do not stand against class solidarity; it is the bourgeoisie and its lieutenants who do.

The leftist tendencies that oppose support for Democrats and therefore for Jackson are relatively few. In words they are more radical than the Jacksonian left, but there is no fundamental difference in terms of class. Their objections to Jackson are programmatic and personal; they do not see the criterion as class against class. If they apply the term "middle class" to Jackson it is simply a statement of hostility or description rather than of whose interests he represents.

In reality their approach is sectoral. Since all blacks are oppressed in the U.S., these leftists choose to overlook class differences among blacks. They oppose the Democratic Party because it is a particular institution of evil, not because it is an instrument of the capitalist class. In other words, Jackson's main problem is that he is running as a Democrat. If he had the same constellation of class forces outside the party, they would support him or someone like him.

Consider the International Socialists (IS), which calls for Jackson to run independently. (No surprise: an IS minority wanted to endorse Democrat Harold Washington in Chicago.) Thus two IS leaders write in the March 7 *Guardian*:

"We believe Jesse Jackson would be most responsive to the real, immediate and historic needs and to the mass sentiments of his base if he ran for President as an independent. And we believe activists should advocate that he do this ..."

They go on to add that his present campaign "represents an historic opportunity tragically wasted because it remains locked within the Democratic Party."

The Revolutionary Socialist League once split from the IS and had a brief honeymoon with revolutionary class politics before receding back. Now it is virtually indistinguishable from its forebears. Like the IS, it rejects Jackson as a Democrat but likes him as an independent:

"If Jackson were to lead a third, independent party campaign based upon the publicity and organization built up through the Democratic primaries, such a campaign would have the potential to generate a movement combining electoral action with other forms of protest. Such a campaign could develop into an alliance of Black people, Latins, women, gays, workers and progressive groups that would deserve serious consideration regardless of its formal label or Jackson's own reformist politics." (*Torch*, February 15.)

The IS also supports Jackson as the leader of a list of groupings not different from the RSL's. For both, workers are just one constituency like any other. A Jackson-led third party would not in their eyes (or in reality) be a working-class party, not even a black workers' party. Like Jackson and the Jacksonian left, they too accept the idea of a coalition of sectors instead. So they favor a third capitalist party today. Their customary calls for a reformist party (like the British Labour Party) are cast into the far future along with the even more impractical idea of revolutionary socialism.

A third capitalist party led by petty-bourgeois elements is no "realistic" step toward class independence; it is an attempt to head off class consciousness when the looming social explosion occurs. Black workers have never bought a third party despite the attempts of many radicals to launch one. Coalitions — that is, pacts among sectors to broker the system — have to come to grips with power. Third parties, especially non-existent ones which accept capitalism, have all of the problems of the Democratic Party plus a lot of rhetorical demands



which everyone knows are utopian. What they don't have is the Democratic Party's power, its seeming ability to deliver gains. Who needs them? The left "third party" groups are sending the message that Jackson in the Democratic Party is more serious than they are. And that is correct.

In contrast to the CWP, WWP and NAP, the IS-RSL wing understands that Jackson doesn't want to run independently. But the latter groups would have a difficult time opposing Jackson the Democrat if he did try an independent course after losing the primaries. The RSL already appreciates that the "publicity and organization built up through the Democratic primaries" would be essential. The difference between them and the Jacksonians is not a question of class, only of time.

Another group, Workers Power, is equally committed to sectoral coalitions externally, and it in addition is a coalition itself internally. It can rarely agree on a course of action. While it opposes Jackson with some effective arguments, it is anyone's guess what the group thinks the alternative should be.

The Socialist Workers Party, on the other hand, knows its course very well and is in the process of jettisoning even the minute Trotskyist pretensions that it retains. The SWP opposes Jackson but (like the WWP) has stated that it will support him and withdraw its own candidates if he runs as the head of an independent black party. The SWP regards blacks as fundamentally working-class and therefore defines any black party as proletarian. Thus its differences with black misleaderships always take a moralistic form: they are good outside the Democratic Party but bad inside. Without a class analysis it has trouble distinguishing itself not only from a non-existent third party but also from the Democrats. It has learned to run its own candidates for office in order to avoid the political logic which would put it among the Democratic liberals. The *Guardian*, which has fewer hesitations about naked bourgeois campaigns, has pointedly mocked the SWP for its sectarianism in this regard, running candidates against Washington in Chicago and Mel King in Boston without anything much different to propose — and netting less than a negligible total of votes as a reward.

### Left Lacks Class Analysis

Then there is the Spartacist League, whose idea of revolutionary politics is to substitute ultra-radical rhetoric and abrasive image-making for any understanding of class struggle. While the CP and the WWP use their "independent" candidacies as covers for the line that Reagan, not capitalism, is the enemy, the SL does something similar. The fine print in its press blames capitalism, while the headlines scream that "Reagan is War Crazy!" and paint him as a maniac out of control. If taken seriously, this language only suggests to readers that they had better run out and vote for anyone rather than this madman who is liable to push the button any moment for no rational reason at all. The Democrats could ask for no more backhanded support than that. But in reality Reagan reflects only one version of U.S. ruling class interests. His politics, as well as the liberal Democrats', will lead to war, racism and misery not out of personal craziness but out of the needs of capitalism.

Jackson too is pictured as an evil hustler. Beyond an epithet or so, his relation to petty-bourgeois class interests as opposed to the workers' is ignored. This becomes clear when the SL discusses why it opposes any Jackson-led third party: it is not a question of class but of sufficient radicalness. The SL still boasts of its past electoral support: "when the Panthers ran Huey Newton, Bobby Seale and Kathleen Cleaver as candidates in the 1968 California elections, the SL called for votes

to them (but *not* to their running mates of the petty-bourgeois Peace and Freedom Party)." (*Workers Vanguard*, December 10.)

True enough, Newton, Seale and the Cleavers were more radical than Jackson but hardly more working-class. The Black Panther Party combined radical middle-class and student elements wedded to an openly lumpenproletarian outlook. But the giveaway is the SL's distinction between the BPP leaders who ran on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket and the PFP itself, whom the SL calls petty-bourgeois. The two groups were in alliance because both were petty bourgeois. The SL's inability to call the Panthers either middle-class or working-class shows that it, like the rest of the left, does not discern real class differences among blacks.

### Jackson's Underlying Strategy

James W. Compton is executive director of the Chicago Urban League and a leading Jackson supporter. Six years ago he observed, pointing accurately to the conditions facing blacks in the United States: "Our large cities are in much the state they were in 1965 when the poor of Watts put the torch to the most accessible symbols of their disadvantage." He added, "Without genuine relief the urban poor can reasonably be expected to rise again." But this time he foresaw that they will rise "against class as well as against race, with blacks of moderate achievement and their property among the most ready victims." (*New York Times*, February 13, 1978.)

As Compton foresaw, the black masses saw that the real and illusory gains made in the past were blowing away by the late 1970's, and there were riots in several cities. But where the earlier riots like the one in Watts had struck fear into the ruling class and forced benefits out of the government, now capitalism in crisis would not yield what blacks "of moderate achievement and...property" were pleading for to stave off the upheaval.

On the contrary, the repressive forces of the state tightened their grip on the ghetto, and unemployment and poverty shot up. The press, black as well as white, carried story after story about the hostility toward the middle-class black leadership that abounded in the ghettos. Andrew Young and Jesse Jackson were booed in Miami. Shortly after the riots there one resident commented, "Black people can forget about all that leadership stuff. Black leaders do a lot of talking. But that's all they do — talk." (*New York Times*, June 29, 1980.)

The black leaders could offer no way out except to begin their campaign for voter registration and passive electoral activity. Seeing no other alternative to the failure of violent explosion to produce gains, many blacks followed their misleaders into the Democratic Party they had come to despise. This is the part of Jackson's underlying strategy that is not talked about so publicly: to divert any future black explosion into safe electoralist channels.

Contrary to the left, it is not Jackson who will build a movement of the black masses. Gimmicks and heroes do not create movements. Leaders may point the way, may take command, for better or for worse, or may even derail them. But Marxists, as opposed to leftists and other middle-class political operators, know that it is the system and its contradictions that forces people into motion. The black upheaval is inevitable because capitalism continues to grind people down. Jackson's campaign and the electoral registration drive accompanying it are preventative measures designed to defuse such a movement, not build it. A vote for Jackson is a vote *against* a black upheaval. Likewise, so is a vote for any of the other Democrats supported by Jackson's black political rivals.

Jackson approaches the Democratic Party in order to get it to open its doors further, to incorporate the black masses. He wants to reform, not overthrow it; his challenge should be seen, according to him, "not as a threat but as therapy." (*Washington Post Weekly Edition*, December 19, 1983.)

The party still retains vestiges of its past appeal when it was thought of as the deliverer of benefits for the working people. It was this very capital gained in the past that enabled the Democrat Carter to demand austerity from the masses to restore capitalist profits. It is no accident that Democratic governors and mayors (the growing number of blacks among the latter included) preach the same message. Likewise, it was no accident that mass anti-war movements throughout the century have attracted Democratic politicians with their pledges of peace — and it was equally inevitable that Democratic presidents used this capital to lead the U.S. into World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the invasion of the Dominican Republic and the Vietnam War.

Traditionally, the Democratic Party has tolerated representatives of various ethnic groups, unions, blacks, Hispanics, women, reformers, environmentalists and all others who form its voting base. These brokers bargained and fought with each other for pieces of the pie that the bourgeoisie was forced by mass action to place on the table. The petty-bourgeois brokers and the institutions they were tied to got the largest share. Small favors, small jobs, small concessions but a lot of hope were doled out to the constituents of each sector.

When times were good for American imperialism, especially during the postwar prosperity bubble, there were enough sops to satisfy the brokers and even some of their working-class constituencies. They took the form of welfare-state measures like social security and unemployment insurance as well as business contracts, industry subsidies, government jobs and the like. But today capitalism is caught in a profound economic crisis that is pushing it toward a new great depression despite momentary and shallow recoveries. The pie is shrinking, especially in those sectors that tend to benefit blacks who are shoved to the bottom of the ladder: blacks are disproportionately dependent on government jobs and welfare-state support. The situation is grim — and only beginning.

Carter could not sell his austerity policy, at least not enough to stabilize capitalism, which needs to squeeze far more out of the workers if it is to emerge from its crisis. Carter tried escalating the Cold War in part to justify sacrifices by the American people. His failure produced Reagan, who has tried harder on both counts. If Reagan's failure in turn becomes evident before the election we will see another austerity-liberal regime under one Mondale or another. Jackson's argument that black votes providing the margin of the Republicans' defeat will increase black brokerage gains was already disproved by Carter, who beat Gerald Ford in 1976 by virtue of the black vote.

But one thing is clear in any case. The increasing devastation of blacks, together with their strategic position as workers in hard-hit but crucial industries and services in major cities, means that the system and the Democratic Party need more black faces to preside over austerity.

### The Black Politicians

The black politicians, who reflect the varied interests of the small but socially significant black middle class, are eager to play this role. The numbers of black elected officials are growing (5606 in 1983, an 8.6 percent increase over 1982). Jackson's description of them as "brokers" is exactly on target.

In 1891 Friedrich Engels noted the same phenomenon: "Nowhere do the 'politicians' form a more distinct and powerful subdivision of the nation than in North America. There both of the two great parties, which alternately succeed each other in power, are themselves in turn ruled by people who make a business of politics, who speculate on seats in the legislative assemblies of the Union as well as of the separate states, or who live by spreading propaganda for their party and are awarded with offices after its victory." (Introduction to Karl Marx's *The Civil War in France*.)

This description still fits American politicians, including the blacks. In a previous article (*Socialist Voice* No. 20) we traced the different bases within the black middle class and among politicians that are represented by Jackson on the one hand and his rivals for black leadership on the other. The two wings see the world alike. They have a common stake in the system and in preventing social upheaval. But they are tied to the black masses because American capitalism, racist to the core, will never let them escape this identity. The power of the politicians in fact stems from their brokering for the black masses; without this they would be of no use to the white bourgeoisie.

Given the fact that the black bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois property owning sectors are tiny, the ties of the black middle layers to capitalism are general rather than particular. Naturally the black politicians seek to reinvigorate the poverty programs of the 1960's and early 1970's. That is hardly possible today, but the politicians are still primarily oriented toward the state sector. So they preside over austerity for the masses, over stricter police enforcement, over contraction of the "social wage" in the form of education, transportation and other government services in the cities. The masses' vicarious racial identification with these leaders is used to keep a lid on rebelliousness. This is the true social program of the black middle class and its political leadership, Jesse Jackson included.

### Operation PUSH

Thus Jackson's well-publicized Operation PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity) criticized big corporations like Coca-Cola for not giving contracts and franchises to black small businessmen and for not hiring black workers — and succeeded in winning such contracts and franchises, but few jobs. Far more insidiously, PUSH spreads propaganda among black youth that if they study and work hard they can "make it" under capitalism. This "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" line really means that blacks have only themselves to blame if they don't succeed. But it is capitalism, not a lack of trying, that creates the over 50 percent unemployment of black youth. Pushing may get a job for you instead of the next person, but it can't increase the total available.

Jesse Jackson also has stood for one of the favorite programs of the Reagan right, the sub-minimum wage for youth. Recent studies show what Marxists (and, indeed, dedicated trade unionists) have known for decades: this only means a general lowering of wages. If there is any additional hiring of youth, under all foreseeable conditions this will mean white youth.

PUSH's attitude toward workers and unions in Chicago, its home base, is instructive. For example, it acted as strikebreaker in the recent strike by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and the Coalition of School Employees Unions. It sought a court injunction to force the CTU workers (who are 55 percent black) back to work. PUSH was particularly vehement during this strike, since it considered it an attack on



black prerogatives now that Harold Washington was in power as Chicago's mayor.

Jackson represents an attempt to pull together a multi-class (not just multi-racial, as "rainbow" implies) coalition for political office, an embryonic popular front. Like all other class collaborationist arrangements, it necessarily sacrifices the workers' interests for those of the upper layers. It is no accident that the welfare of black politicians in Chicago was seen as coinciding with the continuation of the capitalist cutback and austerity program.

Recently a Chicago resident sent a pointed letter to the *Guardian* which correctly accused the paper of "refusing to even report the attacks of Harold Washington on labor, especially public sector workers, many of whom are black, Hispanic or female." The letter quoted Washington's chief labor negotiator, Richard Laner, whose comments had appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*:

**"There's been a long history in the public sector that one has a job for life and will get a raise every year. But the economy has changed all that. The mayor wants to increase productivity as if this was a private company, watch the dollar and ride tough and hard. The unions, in my view, haven't accepted that."**

This is the social program of austerity for the workers supported by the supposedly "working-class left" in the U.S. today!

### Jacksonism in Action

How Jesse Jackson will play the Democratic Party game isn't mere speculation. There are concrete examples. One of his strongest supporters urging him to run for the presidency was Bobby Jackson, head of the Jersey City, New Jersey, city council. Bobby Jackson is now a state coordinator of Jesse Jackson's campaign. In 1981 he was a running-mate of Mayor Gerry McCann and since then has been the mayor's strongest ally among blacks in the council. Likewise Operation PUSH, in which Bobby Jackson is active, not only supported McCann in the election but continued to be his firm ally.

Mayor McCann is a confirmed Reaganite, the head of Hudson (County) Democrats for Reagan in 1980, who maintains warm relations with the administration, especially its notorious Secretary of Labor, Ray Donovan. He was offered a sub-cabinet post but chose to run for mayor again. During his tenure he has tried to crush rent control, and has so far succeeded in gaining significant exemptions from it; he has raised local taxes 30 percent in two years, and has openly favored chasing the poorest people (mostly black and Hispanic) out of the city.

The political columnist of the *Jersey Journal* wrote on August 10, 1983:

**"Council President Bobby Jackson's relationship with McCann remains a puzzle to many, but for now it appears to be mutually beneficial. Jackson has been able to secure prominent positions in municipal government for blacks, while McCann has been able to deflect some criticism of his generally conservative administration through Jackson and his allies."**

Jersey City politics are not basically different from other cities' run by the Democratic party, just more naked. It all means essentially a few positions for black politicians at the expense of the black masses.

The Bobby Jackson-McCann coalition may well break down; such is the nature of coalitions. But it won't be over principle or out of sudden concern for black-Hispanic unity among the working people. Nor will it be out of a sudden heartfelt concern for the anger of black and Latin politicians

in New York City that Jersey City is using federal funding to snatch jobs from blacks and Hispanics across the Hudson River in New York. No, it is just the Democratic war of all against all; the rainbow coalition can't even span the Hudson.

### Jackson's Foreign Policy

Jesse Jackson's role as the left face of capitalism, struggling to maintain the system by reforming it to allow potential rebels to get a little piece of the action, is true abroad as well as at home. Take his visit to South Africa in 1979. The apartheid regime gave him permission to come when he assured it, in familiar terms, that his trip should be seen "as a therapy and not as a threat" (*New York Times*, July 24, 1979).

Oppression, however, demands destruction, not therapeutics. Young South African black power militants denounced him for associating with the racist regime's token black leaders. He was also denounced for praising government minister Pieter Koornhof, the "liberal" face of apartheid, as a "courageous man" and one "for whom he had high regard" (*New York Times*, August 2, 1979). His attempt to patch up apartheid by endorsing its more liberal facade earned him the title of "a diabolical Western agent" from one militant. Would that the American left could speak the truth so well.

More recent was his renowned trip to Syria to rescue U.S. Lieutenant Robert Goodman, captured after a bombing flight over Lebanon. The aim of Jackson's mission was to promote a deal between U.S. imperialism and the Syrian rulers to carve up influence over Lebanon peacefully. Jackson, like some other Democrats, understood that the American forces could not succeed in stabilizing Lebanon as open supporters of the neo-fascist, minority Gemayel regime. A few months ago, however, he still favored the U.S. presence there; now he prefers a United Nations contingent, as a cover, to maintain the imperialist presence and keep the Lebanese masses down. The one thing Jackson did not do was use his highly publicized expedition to criticize U.S. or Israeli imperialism.

Quite the contrary. Jackson told the press that "the Arab war against Israel must be stopped," (*New York Times*, January 6) whereas it is Israel that continues to be the aggressor in the war to crush the Palestinian people. Jackson had gained a reputation for being pro-Arab because of his wish for the U.S. to hold talks with the Palestine Liberation Organization. The racist anti-Arab media still attack Jackson and PUSH for accepting donations from Arab sources. But Jackson is not supporting the Arab masses; he is simply agreeing with a section of the American bourgeoisie that wants Washington to have ties with reactionary Arab regimes as well as with Israel.

Jackson's attitude on the Middle East was aptly rebuked by a spokesman for the moderate American-Arab Relations Committee, whose president stated that Jackson's pronouncements showed "utmost contempt for the feelings of the Arab people." He added, "You are a disappointment, brother."

Jackson's actual pro-imperialist position does not stop the *Daily World*, *Workers World*, the *Guardian*, and *Workers Viewpoint* from hailing their hero's "peace mission" to Damascus, his support for the Arab people, his fight against imperialism. They are equally glowing about his supposed anti-imperialist policies toward Central America. Yet Jackson himself has been more than explicit about the real nature of his position. It is designed to be the best possible defense of the imperialist system. During the Democratic Party debate in New Hampshire, Jackson urged that: "We should be in a state of readiness now. Some things are worth fighting for. Honduras and Lebanon are not worth it, but the Persian Gulf is worth it. The industrial base of the Western world is at stake."

But of course the left understands Jackson better than Jackson does. Irwin Silber asserts in his paper *Frontline* (January 23), "Whether he is completely aware of the fact or not, Jackson is the political representative of that section of the working class and laboring masses with the least basis to support imperialist policy." Thus does the left again offer itself as a cover for the liberal wing of imperialism.

### The "Hymie" Affair

As of this writing it has been some time since Jackson, after a two-week delay, confessed to and apologized for his now-famous chauvinist remarks about Jews as "Hymies" and New York as "Hymietown." Most of the Jacksonian left has moved with equal slowness to comment. So far only the *Guardian* has taken a clear-cut position objecting to Jackson's remarks. It believes Jackson's stance to be "counterproductive" to what still is "the most promising vehicle at present for building an independent progressive political movement" (March 17).

It concludes that "someone in Jackson's position ought to take the lead in showing that being anti-Zionist is not the same thing as being anti-Jewish. He hasn't done this. And he has undermined his principled Mideast position by not doing so." The *Guardian*, of course, has every right to sympathize with Jackson's "principled" position, which it agrees with and therefore falsely qualifies as "anti-Zionist." But it is correct in noting Jackson's difficulty in distinguishing Zionism from Judaism. Still, the *Guardian* cannot point out the fundamental source of Jackson's statements, since like the rest of the left and all of the Zionists it holds a nationalist, class collaborationist perspective rather than a working class one.

The Zionists have indeed harassed Jesse Jackson, complaining bitterly about his Mideast position. It is noteworthy, however, that Zionist organizations were far more gentle in treating John Connally, a conservative white contender for the Republican nomination in 1980, who held a similar position to Jackson's on Israel and the Palestinians. Likewise, the level of bile directed against George McGovern's candidacy is far less, and he too reflects a similar trend in U.S. bourgeois opinion.

The Jewish leaders are quarreling with Jackson because he represents an attempt to broker a larger share of the diminishing pie. As the last ones in on the take, their own position of acceptance in American capitalism is still precarious. They have been fighting black leaders of various stripes for years over quotas, affirmative action and the like. This quarrel has achieved notoriety as "The Crisis in Black and Jewish Relations." It naturally focuses inside the Democratic Party, capitalism's major agency for deepening social divisions. The newly arrived Jewish politicians like New York mayor Koch fight off the demands of the later-arriving blacks. The Jackson candidacy, demanding a major new division of the pie, is seen as a threat not only to the Jewish leaders but also to their historic allies among party apparatchiks and labor officials, especially because of the power of the black working class.

American Zionism is not only a reactionary pro-Israel nationalism but also a specific adaptation to U.S. capitalism. It is a central aspect of the ethnic ideology purveyed by the Jewish bourgeoisie to break the once-powerful working-class identification among the Jewish masses. Even today, as the more affluent Jews become more reactionary, there is still a strong progressive potential among white collar working-class Jews. Sectoral identity at the expense of class consciousness is maintained through demagoguery on the "Arab threat" and increasingly the "black threat" as well.

Jackson thinks the same way, in reverse. When he sought to apologize for his "Hymie" remarks, he cited the hostility of an

interviewer named Cohen against his daughter, who was applying for entrance to Harvard (symbolically enough). For Jackson the problem was not just the Zionists, but the Cohens, the Jews — just as the Jewish bourgeoisie sees the problem as the blacks.

It is important to note that Jackson was not attempting to whip up the black masses against Jews. That could only backfire now in racist America. The entrenched Jewish leadership has somewhat more leverage to heighten Jewish hostility toward blacks. And when the situation gets worse economically and socially, the fight will become more naked.

If the black proletariat allows its middle-class leadership to take it along the same course in the Democratic Party as the Jewish leaders have gone, the results will be disastrous. What is necessary is an end to sectoral coalitions inevitably based on the class outlook of the upper strata, and a turn to class consciousness. But the left also sees sectoralism as paramount; it too is mired in its networks, coalitions, and pacts which will inevitably break down. This can only fuel fratricidal warfare between sections of the working class.

Jackson's thoughts on "Hymies" were par for the course for bourgeois politicians. For the left to cover, equivocate and apologize for such garbage on the part of the man they put forward as the hero of the oppressed is a new level of degeneration, just a foretaste of what these social cretins have in store.

### The Left vs. Marxism

In the last analysis, the reason the "socialists" support the austerity-minded black middle-class leaders is that they themselves reflect a radical section of the same layer, the same intelligentsia. The cynical contempt all of these people have for the workers is enormous. The existence of the radical left in the working class, and especially its middle-class aristocracy, is a world-wide phenomenon.

Much of the left rhetorically hails "the masses," "the people," "the rank and file," "the movements." They are constantly putting forward minimal liberal or "anti-Reagan" programs for these movements and masses. They inevitably presume that you have to water down your own nominal program (that is, not raise openly socialist or revolutionary ideas) to "spark," "arouse," "galvanize," "electrify" or "generate" mass movements. Therefore they have an easy unconcern at best or an apology in practice for Jackson's pro-capitalist program and actions, since that is what's necessary to create a movement.

That is why so many far-left outfits that began work in the unions in the early 1970's with salutes to the rank and file and tried to devise "rank and file programs" have since wound up in the laps of left-talking labor officials. That is why so many far-left groups who prate about movements and try to devise minimal (always capitalist) programs to ignite them end up serving as lap-dogs for liberal politicians whose goal is to contain any movement, not stimulate it.

The middle-class left has patently opportunist politics, but its remaining qualms about working inside the Democratic Party are purely sectarian and will soon disappear. After all, once you accept that "galvanizing" a movement requires tailing what you consider the present level of consciousness, you accept the Democrats. That is why those leftists who deem themselves too good to actually dip into the swamp allow Jesse to do the dirty work for them. They will soon learn that they have to plunge in themselves.

The notion that liberal campaigns like Jesse Jackson's are steps toward socialism is nothing new. Part of the historic difference between reformism and Marxism rested on this



question. Reformists tend to see liberal capitalists as creeping socialists who press for a slow, progressive transformation of society even if they personally don't see going all the way. Marxists, in contrast, view liberals as defenders of the capitalist system who go along with just enough reforms to forestall socialist consciousness and revolution.

But workers can't be led to socialism like an animal led to a trap with little pieces of bait along the way. They will reject the Democratic Party and capitalism in general when their hope in these institutions is exhausted and when they recognize their own class power through mass struggle. Then all things become possible that seem absurd today. That is why Marxists use election periods, when all eyes are turned to politics, to show that elections can't change the system — only class action can. For this reason we argue for the general strike to unite the working class in struggle.

### What Kind of Black Leadership?

The key to opening up the class struggle is indeed the question of race and racism, as the reformist left asserts. Proletarian leadership is impossible without the participation of black workers far out of proportion to their numbers in the general population. As a result of history blacks generally have a higher level of combativity than white workers; they have a

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## Labor's Dead End

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*continued from page 1*

worry about the middle-class liberals whose illusions irritate some blue-collar workers and endanger the kind of Democratic Party the bureaucrats feel safe with.

Most importantly, knowing that it is only a question of time before the working class explodes against the capitalist attacks of recent years (which heated up in Jimmy Carter's administration), the bureaucrats are preparing the Democratic Party once again for class collaboration and popular frontism. And the increasing stratification of capitalism shows that, in comparison to the 1930's, this will require a greater and more direct role for the unions in the administration of the bourgeois state.

In this light, Mondale's early defeats are a small, twisted but nevertheless possible sign of a future working-class revolt. Gary Hart's voters were not simply from the middle class. Many union workers are openly defying their leaders' instructions to vote for Mondale and casting an anti-Reagan and anti-Carter vote. The tragedy is that, given the labor bureaucrats' history of treachery, workers see no alternative but Democrats. Hart has been chosen not out of workers' positive regard for him but as an "outsider" who seemingly opposes the hated labor bureaucrats and party luminaries. His was the role played by Carter himself in the 1976 primaries.

### The Bureaucrats' Failed Solidarity

Reagan's victory in 1980 was chiefly a vote against Carter — the real Carter, after he dropped the outsider pose once in office. It was not only a defeat for bankrupt liberalism but a real slap in the face for the reformist labor bureaucracy. Post-election surveys revealed that over 40 percent of union members voted for Reagan, who promised prosperity in contrast to Carter's calls for sacrifice and austerity.

In office, Reagan began immediately to carry out the part of his program that was not just hype: slashing social gains won by the workers over several decades and throwing the economy into depression. Unemployment reached its highest levels since the 1930's. Given the huge reserve army of labor

far higher level of anti-capitalist consciousness; and black workers are located in the most strategic industries in the major cities of the country.

In strikes throughout the 1970's white workers began to follow blacks who fought militantly. The prejudices of the ages were subordinated to the common class goal in practice. By following this direction, by fighting in each of the upcoming class battles for the general strike, the way can be paved to a true rainbow that can reach its goal. This means the black leadership that the working class needs.

Instead blacks are offered another kind of leadership, a peace offering to capitalism rather than a new generation of struggle. That is why the issue of working-class independence from capitalism in all its shapes must be posed starkly for black workers in this election campaign. If blacks continue to follow middle-class leadership they will remain trapped in the deadly embrace of capitalism, with its pervasive diseases of racism, depression and war. It is time for black workers to take the lead both in the black liberation struggle and the class struggle necessary to achieve it. That means the working for the proletarian socialist revolution through the struggle for a proletarian revolutionary party. There is no other hope for the working class, black and white. ■

and the increased threat of plant closings, Reagan's program gave the capitalists even more power than in the past, which they used to force concessions in industry after industry.

Reagan's openly pro-business, racist and anti-working class administration united hundreds of thousands of workers who marched through Washington on Solidarity Day in September 1982, a truly massive display of the working class's potential power. But in the face of the crushing of PATCO and the enormous concessions handed to the bosses by powerful unions like the Auto Workers, Teamsters and Steelworkers, Solidarity Day was shaped by the bureaucrats to mask the unions' capitulations and retreats.

The AFL-CIO leadership was then divided between Mondale and Senator Ted Kennedy as its candidates, so no Democrat was invited to speak at the rally; besides, masses of workers were openly contemptuous of the politicians, and their indifference threatened to become clear. But the bureaucrats' openly proclaimed strategy was to become more "political," to elect more Democrats and put one in the White House. In reality this was a diversion from the need for real political action to challenge the capitalists and their state.

This was most clearly seen in the way Kirkland sat on his hands to let Reagan smash PATCO. He and other bureaucrats understood that a real fight, such as a general strike (or even only a united strike of the airline unions), would have meant tackling the government head-on with mass working-class power. Thus even basic minimal trade union action threatened to escalate into an all-out confrontation, a prospect which terrified Kirkland.

In an interview in the October 5, 1981 *Federal Times* (reprinted in *Socialist Voice* No. 15), Kirkland claimed that he was being flooded with mail calling for a general strike to support the air controllers. He stated that about half his correspondents on the PATCO strike "denounce me for not calling a general strike," and added: "I would say I have never gotten as much mail on an issue in my life." Nevertheless, he made it clear that he had no intention of using so strong a weapon. Clearly Kirkland feared unleashing the workers' power more than he feared Reagan's assault on the unions.

In sum, Solidarity Day had two purposes. Besides

mobilizing the unions for a more active role inside the Democratic Party, the bureaucracy wanted to remind both the Democrats and Reagan of the danger of the workers getting out of control. This was also behind Kirkland's airing of the general strike sentiment. The bureaucracy was demonstrating to the bourgeoisie that the unions played a useful role in disciplining the workers' struggles so that they stay within acceptable bounds.

### **The Concessions Drive**

It was no accident that the capitalists' concessions drive accelerated after Solidarity Day. The bureaucrats had proved that they could bleat loudly and even brandish a little strength over the outright destruction of a union, but could still be counted on to hold the workers quiet. Givebacks became an essential part of labor's political strategy: the unions were showing their willingness to act "responsibly." The bureaucrats granted capitalism's needs to rationalize and reorganize industry, insisting only that the bosses also be responsible and use the money saved to keep old jobs and make new investments.

For example, Steelworkers' president Lynn Williams argued that workers deserve credit for accepting wage and benefit cuts last March "that totaled in excess of \$3 billion, with the expectation that efforts could be made to revitalize and modernize the industry." But the lesson of steel was that jobs were not saved by concessions. USW officials were embarrassed and angry when U.S. Steel took the workers' money and used it to buy Marathon Oil instead of investing in steel. New investment has primarily gone into labor-saving technology that eliminates jobs.

Recently the UAW revealed an internal General Motors document showing the company's intent to eliminate wage increases in favor of more incorporative devices like profit-sharing. The labor leaders are in a poor position to combat such an attack, since they too are committed to strengthening the companies as the way to save jobs. In the past G.M. had rejected similar UAW proposals as "socialistic." Now it uses the union's own idea as a weapon against it. Not by accident, the report also indicated that G.M. would use its savings to reduce its work force by almost a quarter within three years. Such is the real logic of class collaboration as the "practical" way to deal with unemployment and falling living standards.

While the so-called "recovery" has momentarily dampened the employers' urgency for pushing concessions, it has hardly ended it. In fact, the economic upturn in 1983 was in large part a result of the massive unemployment and concessions, both of which drove wages down. Workers were squeezed in order to raise the capitalists' profit rate. But despite enormous concessions, the givebacks so far are nowhere near enough to solve the problems of a sick system. Thus labor's reward for its shameful behavior is to find itself pressured for more.

To top it off, capitalism has rewarded the bureaucrats' noble pacifism with the February 1984 Supreme Court decision legalizing the corporate tactic of breaking labor contracts by using phony bankruptcy declarations. Here stand the Captains of Industry thumbing their noses at the "sacredness of contracts" so crucial to bourgeois ideology, while their labor lieutenants piteously defend it in terms of bourgeois legality.

### **The Unions' Response**

As a result, we now see concessions demanded in industries not facing bankruptcy, where bosses seek to take advantage of the weakened condition of the unions. This was clearly the case with the strikes at Greyhound, McDonnell Douglas and

Phelps-Dodge. After a long and bitter walkout, Greyhound workers accepted a 7.8 percent pay cut and several important concessions. What angered workers most was the fact that Greyhound forced the strike, not because it was losing money but because it wanted to reorganize and take advantage of the transportation industry's deregulation.

The McDonnell Douglas case was similar: there a 17-week strike ended in defeat as workers swallowed concessions despite the company's improved economic condition. Ominously, both strike showed big business's growing tendency to use scabs — and to get away with it. And in the militant Phelps-Dodge copper miners' strike in Arizona, National Guard forces were sent in to break the strike by Democratic Governor Bruce Babbitt, who had been elected with labor support on a pro-union platform. Clearly labor's defenses were collapsing.

Fearing more PATCO's, the unions replied to Greyhound's union-busting with rallies and support activity. But once again the AFL-CIO leadership's response was more pathetic than powerful. No attempt was made to really shut Greyhound down. In Detroit, UAW repair and maintenance workers crossed picket lines, while in some cities truckers belonging to the Teamsters continued to deliver gasoline and other supplies. In an *AFL-CIO News* editorial (December 24), the bureaucrats again voiced their only answer, electoralism to mask capitulation:

**"In this atmosphere, short-sighted corporate managers see an opportunity to bash unions with impunity. They know the Reagan Administration will not intervene and they believe the legal protection of unions has been so eroded they can escape retribution for their dirty tricks.**

**"The response required from organized labor in this atmosphere is clear: more solidarity within union ranks and greater political activity than ever in 1984 to return fairness and progress to the federal administration."**

The problem, you see, is the short-sighted capitalist managers who want to smash unions and whom Reagan encourages rather than controls. Thus the solution is to elect far-sighted Democrats who will appreciate labor's responsible groveling and whose "fairness" will reward the bureaucrats for their sell-out strategy.

In an interview in the same issue, Kirkland stated his hope that management will adopt a "long-run" view and raised the danger of what might happen if it doesn't. Referring to 1984 contracts, he said:

**"So it'll be a difficult year, and it'll be made a bit more complex because some industries will be emerging from acute recession where they've squeezed down their workforces to such a point that any revival of activity will be reflected in very rapid increases in productivity and in profits. So those managements will be approaching the bargaining tables swollen with profits and yet probably encouraged by their colleagues to be a bit on the rapacious side with respect to what they regard as an advantageous bargaining position because of high levels of unemployment. And those attitudes can well lead to strife. I hope that a measure of reason will prevail and that a long-run view will govern.**

**"That is to say that trade unions are here to stay, and the sun doesn't shine on the same quarter of the anatomy every day. And working people and their unions have long memories."**

Kirkland has much reason to warn the bourgeoisie against pushing too far. Workers have begun to show they have had enough of givebacks and the Reagan attacks. Despite the sell-



out contract and the rotten role of the labor bureaucracy, the Greyhound strike hit a raw nerve among workers and pointed to the growing possibility of a real upsurge. Workers who have been forced to accept concessions are looking forward to a chance to give something back to their bosses.

### The Coming Struggles

Kirkland's remarks take on an even greater significance when you examine the collective bargaining picture for 1984. Three million of the 7.9 million workers under major contracts (those covering a thousand or more workers) are affected. These include mining, oil, construction, railroad, auto, maritime, food and postal workers.

Kirkland and his fellow bureaucrats must tiptoe and weave through a class struggle minefield in order to carry out their electoral strategy. During the Greyhound strike, Dominic Sirignano, president of Local 1202 (representing New York City, Albany and Montreal) of the Amalgamated Transit Union, accused Reagan of carrying out a "revolution" and of re-creating the class struggle as it existed in the 1930's. Sirignano, like Kirkland, sees the employers' offensive as an unfair way to treat unions that have been so cooperative with management. For the bureaucrats, class struggle should be a thing of the past.

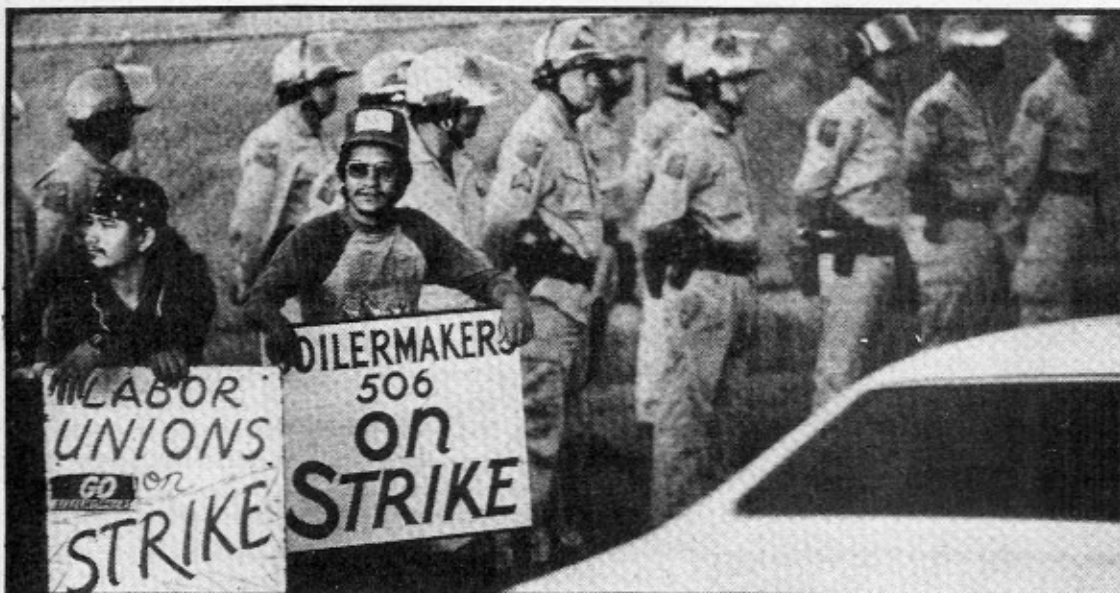
In 1982 Kirkland felt safe enough to ignore calls for a general strike and even openly discussed the question. But if the PATCO strike drew such a response, imagine the tremendous pressure Kirkland would face if the nearly 600,000 postal workers were to take on Reagan. The idea only

The bureaucracy's electoralism is not simply a diversion but a recognition, based on its threatened position, of the primacy of politics. With membership and the dues base growing ever smaller and direct efforts to crush unions on the rise, the bureaucrats are forced into the electoral arena. The problem is not political action but that their political strategy is aimed to prop up the capitalist system at the workers' expense.

Since our inception in 1976, the League for the Revolutionary Party has fought for a political strategy for the working class emphasizing the general strike weapon and the urgent importance of a revolutionary party. Under the present crisis of capitalism, defense of even past workers' gains means going beyond trade unionism and towards the struggle for political power. Trade unionism is at best a rearguard action.

Our fight for the general strike takes on greater importance today, as virtually every sector of heavy industry is in deep crisis, with the most powerful unions proving unable to meet the challenge. In steel, union membership is down fifty percent from 1.4 million and is still falling. While the situation in auto improved during 1983, tens of thousands of jobs have been lost permanently. The militant UMW faces a declining membership and a loss of power, since it now mines only 40 percent of the nation's coal.

The desperate unemployed look enviously at the jobs of the employed workers, while the present leadership does little more than talk about their plight. As the Chicago mayoral elections demonstrated (see *Socialist Voice* No. 19), the historic capacity of white workers to be whipped up by



*Police vs. pickets at Phelps-Dodge copper mine strike in Arizona. "Pro-labor" Democratic Party governor also sent troops to crush strike. AFL-CIO's practical politics practically invites union-busting.*

leads the bureaucrats to work harder for the Democrats. But just as Reagan hopes to make it through November before the next economic crunch, so too the labor leaders fear that any outbreak of the class struggle will destroy their electoral strategy. The question is not whether the workers will explode but when.

### An Alternative Strategy

While the bureaucrats may not be able to obliterate working-class mass action, they may succeed in keeping it from winning when it does occur. If so, the consequences will be disastrous, even in comparison to today's attacks. It is vital for the most advanced sectors of the working class to intervene. Since the bureaucrats are seeking to divert workers from class struggle into the trap of the Democratic Party, it would be a serious error for revolutionaries to ignore the elections.

bourgeois demagogues into venting their problems on blacks is still very much alive. The huge jobless rate among blacks and other minorities threatens to turn one group against another in real life, despite electoral rhetoric about coalitions, networks and rainbows composed of leaders at the top. If the labor statesmen have their way every struggle will be divided and derailed.

### The LRP Campaign

To challenge the bureaucracy's strategy, the LRP is undertaking a political propaganda campaign to raise the necessity for a class-conscious revolutionary alternative to capitalism. The aim of the campaign is not to galvanize the working class, for revolutionaries do not create the class struggle — it is the product of the capitalist system itself. The idea of a small group such as ours (or even the modestly larger

leftist groups) electrifying the working class into motion by some gimmick or by a "reasonable" (read: minimal) political program is a triumphalist absurdity. Instead, our purpose is to give leadership to other advanced workers, whose eyes are trained on politics now and who are looking for an alternative to the dead-end electoralist strategies.

*Class struggle, not the capitalist electoral trap!* Revolutionaries participate in elections in order to expose the nature of capitalism and its fraudulent democracy. The idea that the system can be transformed by electoral activity is an illusion, and a trap for the working class. Real gains are won through the strength workers wield in struggle. While the labor bureaucrats decry the openly anti-working-class Reagan for exposing their lie that the class struggle is a relic of the 1930's, revolutionaries explain that it is a product of the irreconcilable conflict between proletarians and capitalists. Reagan did not create the class struggle; he merely revealed its one-sided character today.

*A vote for the Democrats or Republicans is a vote for racism, depression and war!* These will be the inevitable results of maintaining capitalism. With the perspective that its crisis must deepen, the system becomes more vicious and destructive. A depression worse than that of the 1930's will be needed to eliminate the massive balloon of fictitious capital, wipe out weaker capitalists and drive down wages. Even this will prove insufficient, and the bourgeoisie, as in the 1930's, will have no alternative to turn to but fascism and war.

*Workers need a general strike!* It is not enough to criticize electoralism. Workers need a political alternative. The general strike means a united front of all workers to defend their immediate interests under attack. It would show the entire working class its true power, uniting it in a direct struggle against not only the employers but the bourgeois state apparatus as well. The general strike poses the question of power — which class shall rule? — and thereby the necessity of the socialist revolution for a workers' state.

*Build the international revolutionary party!* Capitalism has reached the destructive stage of imperialism, and the problems facing the working classes and oppressed people are international. The revolutionary leadership of the proletariat must be organized in an international party with an international perspective and strategy. This means the re-creation of the Fourth International (see *Socialist Voice* No. 18 for the discussion of this slogan at the LRP convention). With the continuing Cold War based on imperialist rivalry and the growing tendency toward trade wars and protectionism, the international socialist revolution is the only alternative to the madness of nationalist capitalism.

### **Left Offers No Answer**

In channeling the working class into the electoral trap, the bureaucrats have been aided by the socialistic left, which has moved rightward in a desperate response to Reaganism. These organizations either endorsed Walter Mondale as the labor candidate, supported Jesse Jackson's campaign (which means strengthening the bourgeois Democratic Party and ultimately voting for it), or are advocating a third party; see the article on Jackson in this issue. In contrast, there is the rank-and-file approach of leftists like those who publish the magazine *Labor Notes*, which cedes the political field to the labor bureaucrats by ignoring the impact of elections.

*Labor Notes* reveals the utter fraud involved in "rank and file" unionism. This means emphasizing struggles for shop-floor control and segmented economic issues, questions that cannot tackle the wholesale social attack on the working class.

Those who have decided that workers are capable only of rudimentary steps forward and minimum programs try to corral them into narrow rank-and-file groups. Since the workers have a wide variety of political ideas, any political program is ruled out since it would divide the group. The bureaucrats, in contrast, do not hide their politics like the phony socialists and therefore have a clear field to promote their pro-bourgeois views without forthright political opposition.

Unwilling to confront the bureaucrats' Democratic Party strategy, *Labor Notes* only hints at its own strategy, that of building a labor party. Because there is no movement within the bureaucracy for such a party, most rank-and-file reserve the idea for a future stage. (Indeed, some key *Labor Notes* supporters have been swept up in the Jesse Jackson drive, advocating a third party campaign for him; and this, given the mutual hostility between Jackson and the unions, would be nothing like a labor party.) Other leftists, however, mainly those who claim to be Trotskyist, anticipate the growth of a left bureaucracy by calling for a labor or workers' party today.

This has nothing to do with Trotsky's use of the labor party slogan in the 1930's as a means of breaking the militant mass movement from the restraining leadership of the pro-Roosevelt bureaucracy. The Trotskyists directed a challenge to an existing left current in the labor leadership by demanding that it carry out its program and fight for power. The existence of a mass struggle meant that the program of an independent working-class party coming out of a labor party campaign would not automatically have been reformist. In the labor party movement the Trotskyists fought for the revolutionary program as a means for building the revolutionary party.

In contrast, under today's circumstances a labor party can only mean a reformist outfit led by today's unmilitant leaders, something like the British Labour Party. Despite occasional fine-print disclaimers, the slogan can mean nothing else to workers. And they would be right to wonder why they needed such a non-existent party when there exists a real Democratic Party with the same program.

The current labor party slogan also adapts to electoralism in that it poses a break with the Democrats without challenging the bureaucracy's failure to engage in mass actions to defend the workers. It means only a formal break with bourgeois politics, not with the union leaders' strategy of class collaboration. A real break means challenging the capitalists for power, not the passive electoralism inherent in the labor party slogan today.

### **Mondale's the One**

Lane Kirkland has no use for independent parties. When asked, "Can you think of a labor issue where you and Mr. Mondale don't agree?", Kirkland's response was "I certainly hope not." Meanwhile Mondale is being hard-pressed to show that there are issues on which he disagrees with the unions, as the other candidates have scored points by charging him with being too close to them.

Mondale is clearly running as the unions' candidate, attacking Reagan for being "unfair" and favoring the rich. Reflecting the conservative AFL-CIO leadership, Mondale offers only mild criticisms of Reagan's aggressively imperialist and anti-communist posture in foreign policy, his massive military build-up and his increased interventionism against mass struggles abroad. At the same time, Mondale champions the unions' protectionist strategy, including their support for the "domestic content" bill in auto. He has made his own contributions to the jingoist and racist atmosphere developing over trade rivalries. At an electrical union meeting Mondale



complained, "What do we want our kids to do? Sweep up around Japanese computers?"

But the bureaucrats' enthusiasm for Mondale is not matched by the ranks. Mondale is no Ted Kennedy in popularity, since Kennedy symbolizes a mythic Democratic Party of the prosperous past while Mondale reflects its reality. Kirkland is right about one thing: workers do have long memories, and they remember only too vividly how bad things were under Carter and Mondale. The only thing Mondale has in his favor is Ronald Reagan, but Hart has that argument too.

Whoever wins the presidency, the next administration will have to continue the attacks on the working class. This is true throughout the capitalist world. Both Hart and Mondale, like Jimmy Carter, offer austerity rather than prosperity. Mondale's "fairness" sounds very much like Carter's "equality of sacrifice," let's-all-tighten-our-belts rhetoric. The difference is that now economic conditions are worse, and capitalism requires austerity all the more. With the official labor organizations in his camp, Mondale as president would be able to go further than Carter and even Reagan and impose more stringent measures like wage controls.

Thus a major Mondale asset in the eyes of the bourgeoisie is

that his labor support would make him a stronger president than Reagan, making a statist austerity program more workable. If re-elected, Reagan would have to deepen his prosperity-for-the-rich and austerity-for-the-workers program. His problem is that he is so openly pro-business that workers will not buy his trickle-down, supply-side nostrums without threatening to fight. Once the illusion that prosperity is around the corner bursts, Reagan will face an angry working class.

Kirkland and the bureaucracy have jumped into the electoral struggle out of fear of Reagan. Should Mondale fail (and not be replaced by another labor favorite like Kennedy), they will suffer a further loss of power and prestige. But if friend Fritz does pull it out and make it to the White House, the bureaucrats' tight embrace of his candidacy poses a different danger for them: labor will be responsible for a president in a way that it was not for Carter. A workers' explosion against austerity would be aimed not only against the Democrats but also against their class-collaborationist labor allies. Lane Kirkland's leap into the Democratic Party may thus turn out to be his own contribution to the creation of a working-class revolutionary party. ■

## Sandinistas' Futile Maneuver

# Concessions Bolster Imperialism

(The following article is an expanded version of a talk given by Sy Landy, National Secretary of the LRP, in New York last December.)

*Caribbean Contact* is a newspaper published by the Caribbean Conference of Churches and produced in Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados. In looking over its December issue I turned to editor Rickey Singh's columns, but found them somewhat hard to read since they were completely blanked out, courtesy of the government of Barbados. Singh himself, having made the serious error of being born in neighboring Guyana, has been expelled from Barbados. It would be impolite to dwell on the censorship by the Barbadian government, since that regime, unlike Nicaragua's, is a democratic ally of the U.S., and moreover, one that participated in the noble rescue of Grenada from the enemy censorship-lovers.

Singh's crime had evidently been to oppose the invasion and publish some interesting news about Grenada which was in stark contrast to the official American version of events. In the November issue, Singh had reported that the Grenadian Revolutionary Military Council (RMC) had told the U.S. embassy that it was planning to set up a civilian government, a mixed economy and fresh general elections. (For details, see the article on Grenada in this issue.)

That is, the United States invaded *despite* the vast concessions offered by the RMC. Singh's article proved our contention that the Austin-Coard coup, rather than being "too far left" had followed a strategy of trying to avoid imperialist intervention by offering major concessions. Not only didn't the concessions work; they were an encouraging sign of weakness.

Our analysis was easily made because Grenada was hardly the first case. The murderous coup in Chile by the Pinochet regime, for example, came as a result of Allende's political disarming of the workers' and peasants' movement, given his determination to show the Chilean bourgeoisie and army, as well as the American imperialists, that he could curb the

masses at little cost. Now the same strategy is being applied in Nicaragua. If the correct lessons are not learned in time, the Nicaraguan masses may well be the next to pay in blood for the failures of their leadership.

What the Grenadian and Nicaraguan regimes have in common is not just a mistaken strategy of moderation but a common class position. The Sandinistas, like the New Jewel Movement, represent petty-bourgeois left-wing Bonapartism, which pretends to rule for the whole people but in actuality defends the capitalist state and rules as a surrogate for the hated bourgeoisie.

Bonapartism is a form of rule described extensively by Marx, Trotsky and others. When capitalist society plunges into crisis, then masses go into motion, and polarization between the major classes (the bourgeoisie and the working class) becomes extreme. Frequently a Bonaparte, a leader (or set of leaders) on a white horse, an elite savior, arises, balancing between the polarized classes. Not like an ordinary military dictatorship, Bonapartism has what Marx called a "plebiscitary" appeal among the masses. It speaks in their name, issuing radical challenges against the bourgeoisie and dispensing the most modest sops it can get away with, while underneath it defends its state power against social revolution.

The Bonapartist balance is inherently precarious. For the bourgeoisie to feel safe, the inflammatory rhetoric which the regime requires must go; the mass movement must either be defeated or disintegrated. Order must be restored. From the proletariat's point of view, the rhetoric must be translated into the real gains that the masses originally rose up to achieve.

In the final analysis, that can only come if the workers press their revolutionary momentum forward and make the socialist revolution. If the underlying "permanent" revolution falls short of the necessary goal of throwing off its betraying Bonapartist leadership, then the masses will inevitably be set up for defeat and a massacre at the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Bonapartism as such cannot last.

The Bonapartist rulers must cajole and compel the working class into making profound concessions, to show the capitalists that they are part of their solution, not their problem. Capitalism needs stability to make profits; no stability, no profits, no investment. Mass threats to private property are intolerable. In Nicaragua today, however, if the Bonapartist Sandinistas were actually to crush the revolutionary spirit of the masses and wipe out their gains, they would lose the very base of support that keeps their power alive.

They have stalled the movement of workers' seizing factories. They have held back the peasants' land seizures. But they have not been able to go all the way; the masses are still too powerful. If the mass vitality were ever ended, the bourgeoisie would have absolutely no need for the Sandinistas' radical brokerage service. Therefore they avoid open war with the masses; their policy can only be slow attrition.

The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, however, saw new danger every day. Successive layers of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois types broke from the regime, especially once the American government, frightened by the spread of mass discontent and potential revolution throughout Central and Latin America, increased its economic and political attacks.

The Sandinistas' touching faith in imperialism, their belief that it would welcome investment and placid development while the mass movement remained undefeated, has begun to dissipate. The viciousness of the imperialist threat allows the regime to claim, however, that the sacrifices imposed on the masses are due to Reagan alone and not to its own policy based on such reformist myths.

The imperialist threat is indeed real. Its *contra* tools take their bloody toll every day. But the Sandinistas' response is to constantly cede more concessions while fighting a limited defensive war. This war, which must be conducted without destroying the *contra* bases in Honduras lest that provoke an all-out war with that pawn regime of the U.S., dooms Nicaraguan peasants to constant attacks.

A different strategy, that of international proletarian revolution, of supporting and encouraging the masses of not only Nicaragua but of El Salvador and all Latin America, is ruled out. Of course, from their class point of view the Sandinistas have no alternative. The middle-class regime is caught between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and is inherently unstable. In the long run, it will be overthrown either by proletarian revolution or by capitalist reaction.

Our argument is not that concessions are never necessary. That would be not just bad politics but imbecility. But the manipulation of this obvious fact by fraudulent "communists" who wish to defend the Bonapartist betrayal by the Sandinistas cannot be permitted.

Yes, the Bolsheviks made concessions to imperialism: the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the New Economic Policy, etc. The pro-nationalist left is quick to point this out and to label the Sandinistas' concessions equally necessary. However, there are obvious differences. In Russia the capitalist state was smashed; the workers' state expropriated industry and the land from the capitalists and landlords, repudiated the Czar's debt, held a monopoly on foreign trade, declared its hostility to capitalism and built an international movement aimed at overthrowing the bourgeoisie everywhere. The concessions it made were a tactic to defend the workers' state for a moment in time. Even when on the defensive, the isolated workers' state fought for the international socialist revolution.

And it was the working class which made the decisions over concessions. When the Soviet revolution was born, the

proletarian dictatorship was directed by institutions of mass control, the soviets, within which the Bolsheviks had to seek approval. The teeming and tumultuous life of the soviets was due to their power over the state; they were not state instruments for ruling over the working class. They became that as the revolution degenerated. The Sandinistas copied degenerate Soviet institutions, not revolutionary ones.

The Sandinistas enforced their most fundamental "concession" on the workers the day they seized power when the workers' revolution toppled Somoza. That was the preservation of capitalism in Nicaragua, backed up by the Sandinistas' military disarming of the masses. For the Sandinistas, concessions are not just a temporary tactic; concessions are their program. Tomas Borge stated: "We don't talk about political pluralism and a mixed economy to please the Americans. This is our program and we will continue it no matter what policy Reagan follows." (*Intercontinental Press*, January 31, 1983.) Borge said the same thing to a *Manchester Guardian* reporter in August: "Our idea of the mixed economy is not a publicity stunt. It's a strategic idea. If we were left in peace we would have a more solid mixed economy."

### The Sandinistas' Concessions

The "pluralist mixed economy", democratic capitalism as the first stage of the revolution, is basic to the strategy of all petty-bourgeois nationalists, not just the Sandinistas. Given this primary "concession" of capitalism itself, all the recent waves of concessions to imperialism inevitably followed. They can't work, any more than they did in Grenada. They act only as an incentive for Reagan to up the ante, when the Sandinistas broadly advertise their concessions, to prove their reasonableness. Here is what they have conceded:

1. Full amnesty for all the *contras*, except the top leaders and Somocista officers, with full rights to vote and run for office in the promised elections.

2. Amnesty for the Miskito Indians involved in counterrevolutionary activities, and public self-criticism of the Sandinistas' handling of this problem (which, by the way, is certainly merited).

3. Loosening of the censorship of *La Prensa*, the voice of the bourgeoisie, which gives the counterrevolution more ammunition.

4. Direct guarantees to strengthen the bourgeoisie's hold on the economy, including guarantees to big growers and rich peasants against confiscation of their land, and new high-profit incentive packages for big coffee and cotton producers. Certificates were granted guaranteeing private property for 25 years.

5. Abandonment of efforts to divide the Catholic Church hierarchy by supporting a "people's church." According to *La Prensa*, Church officials declared the initial discussions "very positive."

6. Ejection of all Cuban military advisors; offering to remove all foreign military bases in Nicaragua and to stop any arms buildup and importation of arms. This means accepting the present balance of forces in a region in which the imperialist-backed regimes are armed to the teeth.

7. Giving the Contadora countries (Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela) the right of on-site inspection of Nicaraguan shipments, and explicitly promising not to aid the Salvadorean rebels.

8. Agreement in advance to a joint economic plan for the region, which further weakens Nicaragua's national sovereignty and deepens the hold of the imperialist market



over the Nicaraguan economy.

It is not only the Sandinistas who cave in to imperialist pressures. From the start Fidel Castro recommended moderation to the Nicaraguan leaders. The only lesson Castro and the other Stalinist rulers learned after supporting Allende's policy in Chile was that he hadn't appeased imperialism enough.

Then after the Grenadian invasion, Castro announced that Cuba could do nothing if Nicaragua were invaded. On the military level, of course, this is ultimately true. But one of the real obstacles to an American attack is the possibility of Cuban involvement, which might drag Russia in. The U.S. might not want to actually invade Nicaragua, but its adventurism has its own logic; surrender in advance only encourages such momentum. No serious politician shows all his cards as Castro did, unless he is bent upon the most abject policy. It weakened Nicaragua's hand enormously.

Further, the Cubans recently held discussions with the ex-Sandinista counterrevolutionary leader Eden Pastora, either with the Sandinistas' consent or as pressure on them to meet with his faction. Evidently the Cubans want to woo these *contras* into running in the upcoming elections, or even to join the government.

Reagan's response to the concessions offered by the Sandinistas and their "Marxist" friends can be summed up in one word: more. The U.S. keeps its warships off the coast. Its military advisers and CIA funds abet the counterrevolutionaries in Honduras and Costa Rica, who have stepped up both guerilla attacks and direct acts of terrorism within Nicaragua. After all, the saber-rattling and *contra* attacks against Nicaragua have obviously paid off (State Department spokesmen boast of this openly!), so why not keep it up?

The U.S. bourgeoisie doesn't wish "another Vietnam" in Nicaragua — that would be a war they could not win, an unpopular war against a live mass revolution. Nicaragua is not only larger than Grenada; it had a profound revolution as compared to the more shallow upheaval that placed the New Jewel Movement in power. Also, an invasion of Nicaragua would escalate quickly into a wider conflict, for the masses in El Salvador are still unbeaten. A Yankee invasion would ignite mass discontent throughout Central America.

Therefore the U.S. prefers to meet its goal of ending the Nicaraguan revolution by escalating pressure on the Sandinistas short of a war, if at all possible. The Sandinistas can be forced to form a coalition government, the U.S. hopes, as a step to returning all political power to the national bourgeoisie and imperialism. The breakdown of Sandinista claims to national sovereignty is integral to this plan. That's why Reagan demands "free elections" and Contadora supervision of internal discussions with the bourgeoisie. If the Sandinistas agree to these demands (which is not impossible, seeing what they have accepted already), Reagan will then move on to his next step.

### Repudiate the Debt!

Imperialist pressure is wider than mere threats of war. Nicaragua's backward economy is in terrible shape; it greatly needs assistance. While unemployment decreased right after the revolution, it has gone up every year since; it is now about 21 percent. Inflation is at 25 percent, and consumption, along with the gross national product, has dropped. Nicaragua's trade deficit is \$500 million a year, and it depends on the West for three-fourths of its aid (also, most of its trade is with the West). Pressure from the IMF has caused Nicaragua's

"friend" Mexico to reduce its oil credits.

In 1982, repaying the foreign debt (\$2.5 billion, a relatively high amount per capita) consumed 40 percent of the country's income from exports and forced a 25 percent reduction in imports. The private bourgeoisie is responsible for over \$100 million a year in capital flight abroad. This situation highlights the need for the revolutionary demand: Repudiate the Debt!

The process of strangling the Nicaraguan economy is bound to escalate. Reagan recently called for a blockade of sugar imports from Nicaragua. But the Sandinistas will never willingly cancel the debt, which would mean breaking their ties with capitalism. But for the Nicaraguan masses, debt



*Sandinista demonstration in Nicaragua. Regime walks tightly between revolutionary masses and need to defend capitalism. Its fall is inevitable.*

cancellation means beginning to break the chains of slavery which keep them in a life of endless toil. It is a demand that draws a sharp line between the needs of the masses and the needs of capitalism; it is the kind of wholesale denial of private property rights that is as intolerable to petty-bourgeois Bonapartism as it is to imperialism.

Imperialism's policy of strangulation is not just Reagan's; it is that of the entire U.S. bourgeoisie and its politicians, everyone from Jesse Jackson to Jesse Helms. The liberals prefer only to accompany it with less saber-rattling. They have greater hopes that the Sandinistas can be convinced to take firmer measures against the threat to stability presented by the masses by adding a few carrots to the stick.

Strangulation could win, but only temporarily. Its victory would mean enforcing not just economic "pluralism" (the code word for private property and bourgeois rights) which the Sandinistas already advocate, but political pluralism as well — more, that is, than already exists within the regime. This means open activity by the pro-imperialist bourgeoisie and its parties. In this event, action by the revolutionary

masses would be inevitable.

Despite the outlawing of strikes, unionists have won gains. Peasant farmers have won the distribution of land titles after four years of struggle against the Sandinistas' policies, as well as the cancellation of millions of dollars of debt owed to the state. These were won through implicit strike threats and actual mass demonstrations. Thus pressure for the revolution to advance remains strong. If bourgeois rights were increased at the masses' expense, even the Sandinistas could not guarantee mass quiescence.

### Class Nature of the Regime

There is still plenty of room for the revolution to advance against the bourgeoisie. Over half of the country's main export crops — cotton, coffee, sugar, beef — is produced on large landowners' estates; one family still owns 15,000 acres (against the average peasant holding of 8.5 acres) and processes 52 percent of the sugar in its mills. The figure of the percentage of industry still in private hands is disputed — it is between 40 and 75 percent, depending on whom you read — but whatever it is, countries like Mexico and Venezuela are more nationalized.

The Sandinistas are classically petty-bourgeois politicians, buffeted by conflicting pressures from the big bourgeoisie on the one side and the working classes on the other. Many on the international left consider them a proletarian current, even a genuinely Marxist one. But if you counted the nationalist regimes over the years which have been anointed as "socialist" by the left, it would fill a whole comic book. It is better to look at the actual relations between classes.

Consider the gentleman the Sandinistas appointed as Minister of Labor, Professor Virgilio Godoy, a long-time leader of the Independent Liberal Party. As a *New York Times* article on him (January 9) noted, "he has used his independence shrewdly to win concessions from both Sandinista and anti-Sandinista trade unions" as well as from private employers. That is, his presence in the government allows Sandinista supporters to blame "pluralism" for the concessions squeezed out of the workers. It is just a fact of life, which we will abolish sometime in the far, far future... Given this reality, does anyone need a textbook definition of Bonapartism?

### The Role of the Masses

We have already noted how mass mobilization prevents deeper capitulations by the Sandinista regime. More than once the workers and peasants have reminded the bourgeoisie of who in fact made the revolution. But since many leftists, especially in the U.S., think the revolution was a purely guerrilla achievement, the facts are worth recalling. Right at the beginning of the revolution, Sandinista leader Humberto Ortega observed:

"The truth is that we always took the masses into account, but more in terms of their supporting the guerrillas. ... This isn't what actually happened ... it was the guerrillas who provided support for the masses so that they could defeat the enemy by means of insurrection." (*Intercontinental Press*, February 18, 1980, quoting an interview in the Cuban newspaper *Granma*.)

Along similar lines, the British *Economist* (September 29, 1979) had noted that "the brunt of the carnage in September, 1978, and again this summer was borne by ill-armed working-class militias from the shantytowns, not by the hit-and-run guerrillas."

The *Economist* went on to state approvingly that "...working class irregulars with guns...are being disarmed or

26

speedily incorporated in the Sandinista army." Four years later, with the country under direct attack, a junta member told Marcel Niedergang of *Le Monde*: "We have distributed land and guns. As long as the guns are pointing towards Honduras, then all is well. But if they were to swing around the other way..." (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, July 31, 1983.) The junta is worried for the same reason that Reagan wants to strangle its regime: the masses' revolution is still alive.

The Nicaraguan workers and peasants have now been rearmed with guns. There is still time for them to be rearmed with the revolutionary program to defeat all their capitalist enemies. "Pluralism," economic or political, is a fantasy that cannot last — no matter how genuinely the Sandinistas wish it.

The original aim of the Sandinista regime was to develop the Nicaraguan economy in alliance with "patriotic" bourgeois interests, to whom the rulers would allow substantial political leeway and subsidized economic rewards. Such concessions would also gain the regime at least tolerance from U.S. imperialism, which would come to recognize the benefits of the happy, new productive stability. After all, the old Somoza regime could no longer rule without provoking mass anarchy.

Under benevolent Sandinista rule, Nicaraguan "pluralism" — power sharing among a diversity of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements — would grant the workers and peasants enough benefits so that a new social tranquility would result. Nicaragua would, in time and through class harmony, peacefully evolve into some pleasant form of socialism.

This myth of pluralist transformation ran afoul of reality. Neither the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie nor imperialism could tolerate an unquenched revolution. International capitalism could never feed the mass of laborers in any Latin American country; now the idea that in these perilous economic times it would be able to spend enough to satisfy a mass upheaval was simply nonsense.

Today, as the world economy destabilizes and the imperialists tighten their noose, the Sandinista Bonapartists have less and less room for maneuver. Layer after layer of the "patriotic bourgeoisie" peels off and goes over to the counterrevolution; the Sandinistas are left with a few political "shadows of the bourgeoisie" (in Trotsky's apt phrase) who inevitably act as *contra* lawyers within the regime.

The elections the Sandinistas have been forced to call spell their doom, even if they do not yet recognize it. In the early years of the regime, election would have broken the bloc with the bourgeoisie; since the workers would undoubtedly have voted the capitalist politicians out. More generally, Bonapartism depends on presenting a unified front to the masses. The condescending radical middle-class saviors must speak with a monotheistic voice rather than with Olympian diversity, lest their socially weak feet of clay crack apart between the two class pedestals they rest on. Even limited elections destroy a Bonaparte's ability to oraculate the "popular will." In truth, the popular will is varied, and when the variations come to the surface the regime splits.

One way out is to substitute a coalition government between *contras* and Sandinistas, either running as a team or emerging

**The LRP Campaign** -backed *contras* will accept such a coalition only if the masses are to be disciplined by it. That will require a military dictatorship, implying the end of Sandinism as a political phenomenon.

Another option is for the Sandinistas to hold an election without the *contras*. Even that would undermine them over time. The Sandinista form of Bonapartism has been comparatively weak from the beginning; it could never adopt a single godhead: a Stalin, a Mao, a Castro, a Nkrumah, a

The sentences obscured on page 26 should read:

One way out is to substitute a coalition government between *contras* and Sandinistas, either running as a team or emerging afterwards. The U.S.-backed *contras* will accept such a coalition only if the masses are to be disciplined by it.



Khomeini. Any elections will exacerbate the Sandinistas' internal tensions.

The Sandinistas would hope to ride out the storm by counting on the masses to become so patriotic and self-sacrificing under the imperialist siege, that they forget their revolutionary expectations. Then a coalition and renewed ties with imperialism would be possible. Ideally, the Democrats will win in the U.S. and would be less prone to invade. (In fact, as the Vietnamese learned when Johnson beat Goldwater in 1964, the opposite is more likely.)

However appealing this scenario might be to the Sandinistas, the inescapable economic conditions point in the opposite direction: the workers' willingness to sacrifice in defense of the regime will give way to upheavals to improve their lot, as a better way to defeat the enemy. Here too only a military dictatorship could crush the workers, and the Sandinistas could not survive that without complete capitulation to the bourgeoisie.

But military dictatorship in Nicaragua, however initiated, would only be as short-lived a "solution" as "democratic pluralism." It too would be "pluralist" in the sense that the private bourgeoisie still survives and wields influence, even though not through elections. As in the rest of Latin America, all traditional pluralist forms are being rendered impossible. These countries have traditionally rested on military dictatorships, like Somoza's. A strong regime is needed to guarantee imperialist rule through the tiny layer of comprador bourgeois pawns. When repression produces mass discontent, "democratic" governments sometimes alternate with the military. When such reform regimes produce nothing but promises and reinspire mass discontent, the generals step in again.

In the present crisis of capitalism, the exploited "third world" gets drained even more than in the past. Drought, starvation, poverty and unemployment become all-pervasive. Tinsel democracies and tin-horn militarisms speed up their alternations, in a murderously futile *danse macabre*. Today the new democratic interludes in Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil — along with the impending democratic spasms in Chile and Uruguay — will last only for a few moments. (The bloody, tragicomic "democracy" in El Salvador, which exists only in the minds of American journalists and other liars, will drop the pose too, although the differences will be hard to detect.) When the democracies prove unable to make the masses pay, the hated dictatorships, which failed a moment ago to cope with the crisis and the debt, will threaten to return.

The social glue for the "democratic" alternative is being destroyed. The middle class, which flowered in the rich imperialist countries enough to give the illusion of sustained prosperity and the possibility of class harmony, democracy and reform, is disintegrating. In Latin America the middle-class layer was inevitably smaller and, except in a few of the richer semi-developed countries, it could provide only brief illusions of democracy. That is now ending, just as the crisis is drawing masses into motion. Their upheaval cannot be satisfied by "pluralist" austerity.

Under the conditions existing today, pluralism either of the "democratic" variety or of the narrower military type cannot long survive. The demands of the masses cut too close to the limited surplus-value available to the bourgeoisie in the backward, exploited economies. Economic and political power must be centralized; real dictatorial decision has to replace the "pluralist" anarchy of rulers, whether elected or military, imperialism draining off the lion's share. The system must be regimented to survive. Without this, the mass upheavals would

spread rapidly, and even beaten working classes would not stay defeated. Today, even the crushed Chilean workers are rising again!

Socialist revolution, the creation of a centralized dictatorship of, by and for the proletariat, is the only practical alternative. This is the solution that turns the inevitable centralization to the benefit of the masses. But if the radical petty-bourgeois nationalists succeed in defeating or incorporating the potential revolutionary communist vanguard, then imperialism will have one last hope: the fascist form of centralization just outlined.

As opposed to traditional military dictatorship, fascism rests upon a radicalized popular base of backward petty bourgeois, workers and peasants. If the masses see no hope on the left and do not become class conscious; if they follow right-wing petty-bourgeois elements who proclaim a fraudulent anti-capitalism; then fascism can take power. It can smash the advanced workers and their institutions far more thoroughly than military dictatorships. (This roughly is what has happened in Iran.)

Fascism, financed by desperate sections of the bourgeoisie, at least for a time ends the freedom of individual capitalists to share political power and impedes their economic freedom of decision. It does so, replete with social demagogy and populist rhetoric, because it too is a particularly virulent form of Bonapartism designed to maintain capitalism in extremity. It too finds its central cadre in the middle classes among sections disillusioned with leftist promises.

Already there are right-wing and sometimes radical evangelistic religions growing wildly among desperate people in Central America. For the most part this current is still merely reactionary. But its very existence is a harbinger of the real, populist fascist exorcism to come. Khomeinism in the Middle East is another, more developed form of this spreading new phenomenon.

In conclusion, the Sandinista policy of concessions, beginning with the primary concession of keeping capitalism alive, will ultimately only succeed in feeding the fires of emerging fascism. We must also note that just as the Sandinistas cannot maintain their form of "pluralism" through concessions, so too the American policy of defending it through "human rights" facades or even through generals and death squads is also doomed. That is, U.S. imperialism will be sustained in the future through support to overtly fascist

## ***El Salvador: Revolution or Betrayal?***

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outfits. This points to a change, not only abroad but in the U.S. as well.

We have never been found among those leftist confusionists who yell "fascist" at every murderous right-wing regime. Such condescending saviors have only contempt for the masses, trying to whip them up with demagogy and only only disarming them for the time when the real thing arrives. (If Nixon or Reagan is fascist, as many say, then clearly fascism is bad but bearable.) When we speak of a coming wave of fascism, we mean it. And not the least reason for this "solution" is the myth-making of the "democratic" left that tells people that they can best survive if they act like sheep and lie down with the lions. ■

# Grenada

continued from page 32

bureaucratic shells and the GULP into an electoral and patronage machine. Still, throughout the 1950's and 1960's the workers and small farmers saw him as their champion against the bosses and imperialists. The local bourgeoisie and their British masters therefore saw him as a threat to their property and power.

Despite Gairy's increasingly obvious pro-capitalism, the British threw him out of the legislature in 1957, but in 1961 his GULP won the election and formed the government. The following year the British imperialists suspended the constitution and kicked Gairy out of the government again. The pretext was "mismanagement and corruption." Since imperialism doesn't usually object to pro-capitalist corruption, that wasn't the real reason. The British still feared the power of the working class left over from the general strikes.

But by 1967 Gairy's GMMWU was a company union, and the GULP was his personal patronage machine. He had been in Grenadian public life long enough to prove that he wanted only to enrich himself and selected capitalists. The masses were disorganized. There had been no mass struggles for more than ten years. Gairy had made his peace with the local bourgeoisie and British imperialists. In 1967 they officially accepted him as a fellow looter of the masses. He won the general elections and came out openly as quite a right-wing bourgeois ruler.

As time went on, Gairy became more outrageously oppressive. Once he had led the struggle for free public education. By the early 1970's he had ended government support for secondary and university education. He did this not only to rob the education fund for his own pocket, but also to keep the masses ignorant and docile. He held "elections" regularly, but won through vote-stealing and intimidation.

Gairy was a Bonapartist ruler. That is, he had come to power not as a big planter or tourist hotel owner but as supposed champion of the "common people." He started by balancing between the local bourgeoisie and British imperialists on the one hand and the workers on the other. The big planters' Grenada National Party (GNP) no longer held political power. They kept most of their property and economic power, however. Gairy used his company unions to stifle any workers' struggle. His personal force of thugs, called the "Mongoose Gang" or "Night Ambush Squad" beat up or killed anyone who protested. But in seeming to stand above classes, Gairy could also loot the local capitalists to some degree. He kept the proceeds for himself or gave them to his cronies. Together with his flunkies he formed an upstart

stratum of capitalists. For example, he expropriated 25 estates from middling owners and gave them to his friends (he called this "Land for the Landless"). He took over much of the developing night club and hotel business.

Gairy progressively alienated all sectors of society. Ultimately new opposition formed. Young people from the growing middle class had gone abroad for their education. In Europe they came in contact with social-democratic and Stalinist politics. In Jamaica and Trinidad they came in contact with the black power movement, which they brought back to Grenada. Typical of these elements was Maurice Bishop, a young lawyer.

From the beginning Bishop and other radical middle-class oppositionists organized the masses to form pressure groups, not to take power in their own hands. Politically they allied with the GNP in the 1972 elections. The masses still hated the landlords' GNP, and Gairy won the election without having to steal too many votes. He immediately passed laws repressing the opposition and making it harder to run for office.

With electoral politics less open to them and with increasing anti-government strikes and demonstrations, the middle-class radicals turned to the masses, whom they needed as a counterweight to Gairy. They won leadership in existing unions and small farmers' associations and built new parties under their own leadership. Bishop and another radical lawyer, Kendrick Radix, formed the Movement for the Assemblies of the People. A radical economist, Unison Whiteman, led the formation of the Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Labor (JEWEL) among the estate laborers and small farmers. In 1973 these two groups merged to form the New Jewel Movement.

From 1973 on, the NJM gained a mass following and led a number of struggles against Gairy's government. Gairy responded in late 1973 by arresting the leaders. The Grenadian bourgeoisie turned definitively against Gairy and joined with the NJM in calling a general strike in early 1974. The strike lasted from January to March and featured mass demonstrations and fights with the cops. This general strike could have led to the seizure of power by the working class. But the middle-class NJM and the Grenadian bourgeoisie limited the strike's demands to reforms of the police force. The workers increasingly demanded that Gairy resign before independence from Britain on February 7.

At that point Gairy's last remaining allies, the imperialists, stepped in to save him. Britain and Canada sent ships to St. George's harbor, supposedly for the independence celebrations. As well, Britain sent money through Guyana and Jamaica. The U.S. struck the final blow. The CIA and the AFL-CIO leaders have a front for subverting unions in this hemisphere, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD). AIFLD agents in the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Union got the SWWU to go back to work, opening the port and breaking the strike.

But the mass dissatisfaction continued. More people joined the NJM. And Gairy became a liability to imperialism. He could not control the masses, and his United Nations speeches on psychic research and unidentified flying objects were an embarrassment. Even his own police force was turning against him.

After the defeat of the 1974 general strike, however, the NJM turned away from such mass mobilizations for good. In the 1976 elections it ran in an alliance with two bourgeois parties, the GNP and the United Peoples Party, and won almost half the votes despite Gairy's blatant fraud. But the

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NJM also organized a small underground militia, the People's Revolutionary Army (PRA), and got some guns from police sympathizers.

In March 1979, when the latter warned the NJM leaders that Gairy planned to arrest and kill them, the PRA struck first. With Gairy out of the country, it overran an army barracks and a few dozen PRA fighters arrested most of Gairy's ministers. Then and only then, when most of the government had already fallen, did the NJM address the masses in a broadcast from a captured radio station. They did not distribute arms to the workers or urge them to arm themselves. The masses were only "called upon to go with our armed forces to make sure that the police stations are showing the white flag." Many workers and small farmers armed themselves, arrested police and set up roadblocks and defense patrols, not waiting for the PRA. But the NJM leaders planned to use the masses as an auxiliary force only.

### The Peoples Revolutionary Government

The unelected government the NJM set up included two of Grenada's biggest capitalists. Lyden Ramdhanny, former president of Grenada's Chamber of Commerce, became Deputy Minister of Finance. Norris Bain, owner of an important merchant house, became Minister of Health. The Chamber of Commerce and the Governor-General pledged support. The Peoples' Revolutionary Government promised to maintain a mixed — that is, capitalist — economy with a role for private enterprise. It stated that it would "continue friendly relations" with all neighboring countries, meaning especially the U.S.

The NJM balanced between the working class and local and foreign capitalists throughout its rule. But however much the NJM desired to hold back the masses and cultivate the bourgeoisie, the capitalists would not and could not allow them to stand.

The PRG did make some reforms. It built roads and waterworks and improved the electric supply system. These and other public works helped reduce unemployment from almost one-half to one-third of the labor force. Like other radical nationalist governments, the PRG concentrated especially on literacy campaigns and improved health care.

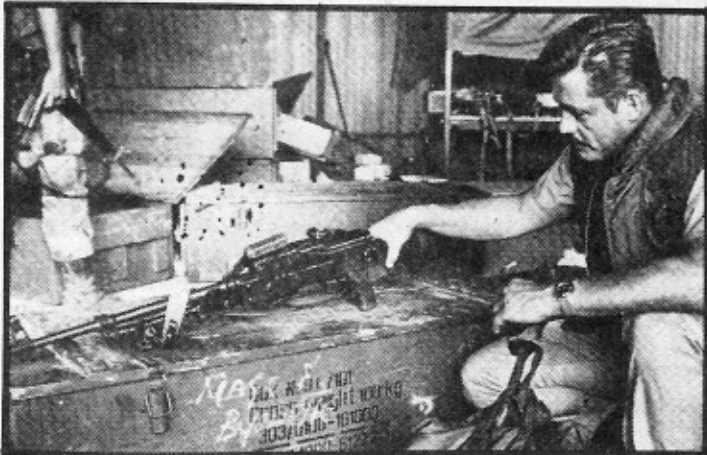
The NJM seems to have been divided early on between two loose tendencies. Bishop and Whiteman headed a social democratic-oriented grouping, while Finance Minister Bernard Coard and his associates apparently looked to Cuba as a model for development. These differences never became public till shortly before the U.S. invasion, for the "People's Government" saw no reason to let the people know about its internal disagreements. These differences were ones of emphasis, though, not principle. In an interview with *World Marxist Review*, a Soviet magazine, Bishop stated: "We see this revolution as being in the national democratic stage. We are an anti-imperialist party and government and we believe that the process we are involved in at this time is an anti-imperialist, national democratic socialist oriented stage of development."

In his 1982 *Report on the National Economy*, Coard wrote along the same lines: "We are developing our economy on the mixed economy model. Our economy as a mixed economy will comprise the state sector, the private sector and the co-operative sector. The dominant sector will be the state sector, which will lead the development process." (Both of these quotations are cited in Fitzroy Ambursley's article on Grenada in the book *Crisis in the Caribbean* edited by him and Robin Cohen.)

Of course, the "democratic socialist" or "mixed economy"

stage in which important sectors of property are statified is the norm in bourgeois countries in this epoch. Private enterprise simply could not survive unless the infrastructural and unprofitable industries were state owned. In Grenada this meant that the NJM sought to improve the traditional industries, which are totally dependent on the world market. The NJM tried only to get better terms on that market and to attract more tourists. While modestly increasing state investment, the NJM left most private estates and other holdings alone. The major state intervention in farming was to run estates seized years before by Gairy. There was a show project called "Idle Land for Idle Hands." These idle lands were to be leased, not seized, from big estates and worked by unemployed youth. It seems never to have involved more than 160 people, on less than 150 acres.

In contrast, when farm workers seized the large DeGale estate in early 1980, the PRG accused them of being CIA-inspired. The government ended the seizure and returned the estate to the DeGale family. Likewise, the PRG recognized unions but forbade many strikes as "contrary to the national interest." When workers at the Coca Cola bottling plant struck for five weeks in the summer of 1979, the government seized the plant and broke the strike. Two years later the PRG returned the plant to its previous owners along with all the profits made in the interim. As Bernard Coard told the Chamber of Commerce shortly after the revolution, "With the revolution has come the end to the forcible seizure of private property."



*Grenada's New Jewel Movement kept guns in storage, not in workers' hands. Regime had no confidence in masses; masses had no confidence in regime.*

Many leftists hailed revolutionary Grenada as a true workers' democracy or even a "workers' and farmers' government." But the NJM leaders and their most knowledgeable supporters are far franker. Take for example the analysis by Fitzroy Ambursley in the article previously cited:

"The trade unions are independent of the PRG and are encouraged within the framework of free collective bargaining and a market economy to struggle for the best possible conditions for workers. The party newspaper, *New Jewel*, has consistently lent its support to workers in struggle against private companies and landlords. However, in terms of maintaining an industrial climate favorable to capital accumulation by both local and foreign interests, the Commissioner of Labor has been instructed to intervene in disputes that threaten to last a long time. He is usually able to force a settlement because of the general support which the

trade unions give to the PRG. It seems that after the revolution a conscious decision was taken by the NJM to send most of its cadres into the trade unions and other mass organizations, and to leave much of Gairy's state bureaucracy intact."

That is, the previous bourgeois state apparatus was not shattered, merely revised. Even more interestingly, the words of the NJM leaders fully support the interpretation that "workers' democracy" is something manipulated from above without actual workers' power. Here is how an agricultural planner in the Ministry of Planning described the "People's Budget of 1982":

"...In the dialogue between the people and the technicians at the councils, the people, having had all the data, information and proposals put before them, put their own real concerns in their *own* way about economic measures that they thought would increase benefits to the masses and build up the economy of the country. The technicians put these into a coherent formulation which was then put to the Cabinet, and they were finally implemented through the budget." (*Combate*, October 1983)

In other words, "workers' democracy" consisted in the workers making suggestions to technicians who make suggestions to the unelected cabinet which makes the real decisions.

Another example: in November 1981 Selwyn Strachan, Minister of National Mobilization, gave a speech on "mass participation in the democratic process," noting that:

"Directly out of the Parish Councils and Workers' Parish Councils have come ideas from the workers themselves which are turning into realities...comrades, these needs and insights are coming from *the lips of our people* through their democratic structures, through the mouthpieces of the Revolution, to be taken up and implemented by the revolutionary leadership..." (ibid.)

Nothing could be clearer — the workers get to talk, and the (unelected) revolutionary leadership makes all the decisions.

That was the "workers' democracy" of Grenada. When the U.S. invaders searched a government warehouse, they found a few thousand old weapons. That apparently was the people's militia — guns locked up in a warehouse where the people couldn't get at them, even when the existence of the state was at stake.

### The Counterrevolution Prepares

Despite the non-proletarian pro-capitalist nature of the NJM government, much of the Grenadian bourgeoisie quickly turned against it. It had welcomed Gairy's downfall, hoping that with Gairy and their imperialist masters gone, they could exploit and rule Grenada without giving anyone a cut. But the NJM had taken power with massive working class support. The workers and peasants, though still without political power, were organized in mass pressure groups behind the NJM. This worried the imperialists and the local bourgeoisie for two reasons. One, the growing world economic crisis meant that they could less afford any reforms even within capitalist limits. Two, although the workers and other toilers had no political power, the revolution had been a gain for them. There was always the danger that the workers would "get out of hand." The possibility of the NJM's going beyond capitalist limits in Grenada is what the bourgeoisie feared. And the imperialists were especially concerned that the Grenadian example would inspire revolutions throughout the Caribbean.

Thus the local bourgeoisie, no doubt with help from the CIA, very soon started to sabotage the NJM government. Since

the NJM was an undemocratic organization, whose policy discussions had all been in secret since the last convention in 1978, the bourgeoisie had the chance to attack it as "totalitarian." This attack, openly supported by first Carter and then Reagan, was completely demagogic and hypocritical. The bourgeoisie's "free elections" would have meant opening Grenada wide to U.S. money and agents. And now that the NJM is gone, those like Governor General Paul Scoon who were calling loudest for elections are against anything of the sort while Maurice Bishop's popular image is still fresh.

The NJM did not hold bourgeois elections or any other kind. Nor did it mobilize the masses against the bourgeois sabotage. It repressed the bourgeois counterrevolutionaries through police actions at the top, jailing right-wing critics and shutting down their newspapers. But it could not completely suppress the bourgeois opposition without workers' action. The NJM was balancing between classes, like Gairy at an early period. It too was Bonapartist, bouncing in practice back and forth between its mass base and the imperialists and compradors. It made concessions to the workers one day and to the bourgeoisie the next.

Reagan knew of Austin's conciliatory role; he also knew of Cuba's publicly proclaimed hostility to the coup. But this did not stop the U.S. from using the Russia-Cuba connection as an excuse for the invasion. One purpose of the attack and news blackout, it now appears, was to prevent the world from finding out that Grenada has been taken over by *not-very-left-wing* thugs. Had that been known, the "anti-Communist" invasion would not have served its purpose of telling the world that the U.S. was armed and dangerous. Reagan's Lebanese defeat would have loomed even larger. Nicaragua might have stayed tougher longer. Iran wouldn't have been as intimidated. And above all the restive masses of the world would have been deprived of imperialism's object lesson. And the Gipper would still be looking for a win.

### The Real Marxist Lesson

The left's party line on Austin and Coard is not as openly sinister as Reagan's, but it is designed to make one conclusion inescapable: that if revolutions go too far the capitalists will get mad and counterattack. The Grenada example proves the opposite. The NJM demonstratively kept their revolution both within capitalist bounds and the narrow borders of Grenada. But the imperialists cannot afford small reforms or the example of a revolution bottled up in a small country, even when the revolution is as drained of mass power by its leaders as was Grenada's.

Even when the middle-class revolutionaries work overtime *not* to "export revolution," any revolution is automatically an inspiration in this revolutionary epoch. But to leave each revolution isolated as an "example" only is suicide — the imperialists will pick such separate revolutions off one by one. We saw it in Grenada, and we are seeing it now in Nicaragua. Further, what reforms can be made under capitalism *must* be very small now because of the economic crisis. As in Grenada, such reforms will not be enough for the workers but too much for the bourgeoisie.

We must recognize that the imperialists and their compradors will attack new reforms *and* reforms won in the past. There's no point in saying "Don't go too far against the bourgeoisie." If we try to stay in the same place the bourgeoisie *must* attack to preserve its declining profits and power.

The only strategy that can win is that of permanent revolution. That is, to win and keep reforms and democratic rights, workers need the socialist revolution. This means the seizure of power by the working class, to build a revolution-



ary state of workers' councils chosen by the masses and making all decisions. It means the seizure of the factories by the workers and the estates by the farm laborers and small peasants.

No revolution in one country, especially a tiny one, can create a viable new life for its people. Revolution must spread to other countries. If the workers of other Caribbean islands had risen up, could Reagan have so easily invaded Grenada? And if socialist revolution had spread throughout the Caribbean, a Workers' Federation of the Caribbean would have arisen. Each island, instead of being alone with poor resources at the mercy of the world market, would unite its economy with the other islands under one economic plan. Such a beginning of international planning would lay the base for real prosperity for the working masses.

The Caribbean, despite its small population, has been the birthplace of world-spanning ideas. In its time it has ignited movements in Africa and inspired slave revolts in the U.S. A Caribbean workers' revolution would have an immense impact on Latin America, Africa, Europe and North America today. With the victory of the revolution in the United States and other advanced capitalist countries, world prosperity and freedom would be assured.

All this remains to be done. The road forward is to build a party that will fight for these things — an international party with sections in each country. The alternative is the continual retreat and defeat of middle-class radical-led revolutions, as in Grenada.

Given the increasing imperialist pressure (both naval exercises and aid cut-offs) and the demands of the Grenadian workers, the NJM was doomed. When the U.S. cut off aid for the new airport and other projects, Grenada had to turn to Cuba and Eastern Europe. The latter gave some aid to preserve their "socialist" reputations. At the same time, the Cuban and Soviet Stalinists advised the NJM to be moderate and avoid angering the U.S. imperialists and Grenadian compradors. The latter, of course, having forced Grenada to turn to Cuba for aid, screamed that Cuban "communists" were taking over. The task the NJM faced was hopeless. It had to reconcile irreconcilable class forces, and inevitably had to turn against itself.

And when it did, with the open split and the execution of leaders coming suddenly and without warning — on top of the fake "revolutionary democracy" and "people's militia" — is it any wonder that many Grenadians were demoralized and disoriented enough to welcome the imperialist invasion?

#### What about Coard and Austin?

Hudson Austin, Bernard Coard, his wife Phyllis (an NJM leader in her own right) and others were arrested by U.S. troops and marched to jail, chained and blindfolded. They have been there ever since without right of counsel or, until late February, any formal charges against them. The new government of little-known businessmen and lawyers, directed behind the scenes by the U.S., plans to bring them to trial in April. Until they can speak for themselves we have no way of knowing what they aimed to accomplish in the ten or so days they were in power.

During the ten days, the Coards dropped out of sight. But Bernard Coard, in addition to his defense already cited of the "mixed economy", was recently on the record with a not very radical line. The *Latin America Weekly Report* (October 7) quoted him as saying that the PRG did not oppose Ronald Reagan's so-called Caribbean Basin Initiative (a typical scheme for imperialist domination), so long as Grenada was not excluded. As Finance Minister, he also carried out Grenada's borrowing from the notoriously imperialist In-

ternational Monetary Fund.

Austin did take certain actions while in power that undermine the universal attempt to paint the Revolutionary Military Council as ultra-leftist (or as "left-wing thugs," in Ronald Reagan's term). National Public Radio news the night of October 30 broadcast an interview with Peter Bourne, a former Carter administration health official whose father, Dr. Geoffrey Bourne, was vice chancellor of the St. George's Medical School on Grenada from which the American students were "rescued." Dr. Bourne has said that General Austin had visited him for discussions after the coup and

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### *The Rise and Decay of Stalinism*

sought his advice about what to do. Austin is "far from being a committed Marxist," Bourne said; he was primarily a military man who "if anything has an inclination to the right." An article by Peter Bourne in the *Los Angeles Times*, reprinted in the November 20 *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, confirmed the broadcast:

**"In the course of my father's discussions with Austin, he had the sense that the general was not particularly sympathetic to the Marxist cause. He talked instead of moving Grenada back to a parliamentary democracy."**

Dr. Bourne then arranged for an interview between Austin and the U.S. embassy officials from Barbados who visited Grenada on October 22. Thus the U.S. government was fully aware of Austin's political inclinations.

Further details were released in an article in the November *Caribbean Contact* (published in Bridgetown, Barbados by the Caribbean Conference of Churches) written by its editor, Rickey Singh, and dated October 25:

**"The United States Embassy in Bridgetown admitted to the Press here yesterday that it had received a communication from the RMC informing it that the military did not wish to stay in power and that within ten to 14 days, they were going to set up a caretaker civilian government, to pursue a policy of a mixed economy, while efforts would be made to hold fresh general elections."**

So Hudson Austin, the supposed hard left-winger, was talking of strengthening the "mixed economy" (i.e., private property) and moving Grenada to a parliamentary democracy. The mixed economy and elections were code words for American demands for private property and a bourgeois-dominated government. "Thug" indeed Austin is, if he was responsible for the murder of Bishop and dozens of other Grenadians during the coup — but "left-wing" or Marxist, hardly. ■

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Spring 1984

## Grenada: An Inquest

In October 1983 the Grenadian revolution suddenly came to an end. On October 13 the central committee of the ruling New Jewel Movement (NJM) placed Prime Minister Maurice Bishop under house arrest. On October 19 he was killed along with many supporters when fighting broke out between army units and a pro-Bishop crowd. The Revolutionary Military Council led by General Hudson Austin (with Deputy Prime

government”?

What were the great differences, if any, within the New Jewel Movement that could warrant Coard and Austin to take such action?

If workers' and farmers' militias and other mass organizations truly ruled Grenada under the NJM, how did they disappear so quickly under the coup and the invasion?



*Cuban construction workers taken prisoner by imperialists were herded out of Grenada after invasion. U.S. "stands tall again," according to Reagan. Perhaps he can find an even smaller victim next time.*

Minister Bernard Coard of the NJM supposedly running things from behind the scenes), widely hated because of the murder of Bishop, desperately tried to make overtures to the United States government. But the U.S. found in the coup the excuse it had been waiting for. Two thousand U.S. troops and fig-leaf forces from the puppet Organization of Eastern Caribbean States invaded the island on October 24, killing a large number of people who got in the way (mostly Cuban airport construction workers), and the four-and-a-half-year-old revolution was dead.

The outrageous and ever-changing lies that the Reagan administration used to defend its "rescue" do not have to be dwelt on here: they were obvious immediately after the event (see "The Rape of Grenada," *Socialist Voice* No. 20) and were widely exposed by the left (and even mentioned in the bourgeois media, upset over the military's blatant censorship). We also doubt that our readers need convincing that the American medical students in the country were not endangered by some Russian-Cuban takeover. In any case, it is insufficient for Marxists simply to denounce imperialism for its brutality and untruthfulness, which should come as no surprise. What has to be done is to answer the real questions of the Grenadian revolution, such as:

How could the NJM's central committee, a handful of people, oust the extremely popular leader of a "people's

This sort of question will not be investigated by the bourgeois media. As well, they have been largely ignored by the left press, which has been happy to circulate the Cuban regime's version of the story. Both sides are eager to place the blame on Coard and Austin, the "hard-line Marxists" or "ultra-leftists," in the two remarkably parallel interpretations. Clearly a closer look is needed.

### Grenada before the Revolution

Grenada is a small island of about 100,000 people. Tourism plus the cultivation of nutmeg, bananas and cocoa dominate the economy. Since World War II, when it was a British colony, it has seen many revolutionary struggles. From 1950 to 1953 there was a series of general strikes in which the whole Grenadian working class, mostly plantation laborers, rose up for better wages and working conditions. The workers won and retained their organizations, the Grenada Manual and Mental Workers Union and the Grenada United Labor Party (GULP), led by Eric Gairy.

Gairy, of course, was no revolutionary. He used the unions and the GULP to get himself into power as "Uncle Gairy," the savior of the masses. He demagogically attacked the big estate owners and import-export capitalists, while demobilizing the union workers. He turned the unions more and more into

*continued on page 28*