

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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Reagan: Capitalism's Last Hurrah

Ronald Reagan's genial message of prosperity for all won him a decisive victory over the Democrats. For millions of frightened Americans he was not the Orwellian Big Brother painted by the left but a Beneficent Grandfather. But his landslide in no way means that the U.S. is entering an era of eternal sunshine and social stability. Just the opposite: the vote masked increasing turbulence in American society.

Governmental elections have always been an instrument in the hands of the capitalists. They are used by the bourgeoisie to help dominate the working class, the overwhelming majority of the population. Real power in America is class power; it lies not in the vote but in the capitalists' control of the means

of production. Elections maintain the pretense that "the people" rule; they are also a relatively secure and efficient means for monitoring the masses' attitudes and working out the ruling class's tactical approach to the class struggle. They reflect (and to a degree, affect) which sections of "the people" the capitalists must align with in order to maintain their sway.

Last year's election was no exception to the general rule. The two candidates' programs were remarkably similar, evidence that there are few major divisions within the ruling class today over the conduct of domestic and foreign policy. Despite their promis-

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South African Black Workers Take the Lead

The South African apartheid system of racial segregation and white supremacy is facing the biggest challenge in its history. Not from the liberal black and white politicians getting themselves painlessly arrested at demonstrations in the U.S., but from the millions of black workers, vital to its capitalist economy, who are in ferment. A two-day general strike in November was overwhelmingly effective. The regime's response of cynical attempts at co-optation is meeting the contempt it deserves.

Set up after World War II, apartheid has made South Africa the most industrialized country on the African continent. The regime bought the support of white workers by reserving high-paying skilled jobs for them while giving the dangerous and dirty work to blacks at wages one-tenth or less those of whites. Starvation wages for the mass of the workforce, coupled with totalitarian regimentation of black people,



South African militant black workers' struggle can smash apartheid only by smashing capitalism. To do so it must break from middle-class misleaders.

provided the high profits and "stability" that attracted investment from all imperialist countries.

But the international capitalist crisis is hurting South Africa too. Gold, which accounts for half of its export earnings, has become devalued. Together with the falling price of coal and a drought which has penetrated most of Africa, it has brought about the worst recession in years. Black workers especially have suffered from the crisis and have responded with mass strikes.

While the final government figures aren't yet available for 1984, in the first six months alone

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Editorial: Famine, Glut & Debt, Inc.

"In a decade no child will go to bed on an empty stomach and no family will have to worry about its next day's bread."

—Henry Kissinger, at the World Food Conference, Rome, 1974.

In one sense Kissinger was right. There is no reason for famine in the world today (nor was there ten years ago), no technological need. The world can now easily produce ample food; in the past decade global production has increased by 3.2 percent yearly, and some poor countries have participated in the expansion. So the fact that masses of people suffer undernourishment and starvation is not an unavoidable tragedy but a crime, a crime perpetrated by the world capitalist system and all who, like Henry Kissinger, embrace and defend it.

Today, at the same time that millions are starving in Africa, hundreds of bountifully productive

American farms are failing economically. The immediate reason for the first is the drought and other "natural disasters" that wipe out crops. The reason for the second, typically under capitalism, is overproduction of food. The capitalist solution? Business as usual: send food to the famine-stricken countries, yes, but too late and not nearly enough; at home, cut back food production. And above all, maintain the conditions that make adequate food production and distribution impossible in the "third world."

What underlies this criminally absurd situation? It is not natural afflictions that create famines. True, countries in the tropical and arid zones have climates less favorable for farming. It is also true that populations are expanding. But famine also hits countries like Zaire and Brazil, with low population densities and ample agricultural resources. Even the droughts are not "natural" but are due to farming and grazing methods that alter the ecology. So the cause lies elsewhere.

President Reagan and other bourgeois ideologists proclaim that the underlying cause of the famine in Ethiopia, one of the worst affected countries, is the allegedly "socialist economic system" adopted by its government. This assertion is stupid and arrogantly self-serving. There are plenty of pro-Western African countries suffering from hunger. As for Ethiopia when the ruling Dergue came to power a decade ago, it was already one of the very poorest countries in the world, with the world's lowest rate of caloric consumption. Drought and famine were recurrent; an earlier famine had brought down the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974.

This has not changed under the Dergue (which despite its "Marxist" pretensions, has substantially continued the policies of the late arch-reactionary Emperor, and in fact slaughtered the revolutionary left). The Ethiopian empire still oppresses minority nationalities in Tigre and Eritrea, wars against their liberation struggles and hinders the passage of food to these especially hard-hit areas. Because the

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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?
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- 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.
- No. 21: Left Sinks into Democrats' Swamp; Labor's Dead-End Electoralism; The Theory of Permanent Counterrevolution; Nicaraguan Concessions; Grenada.
- No. 22: Miners' Strike Rocks Britain; Election '84; Trotskyism and the Russian Question; 1199 Strike.

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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Correction:

The article from Proletarian Revolution No. 23, "Workers Power: A Powerless Answer to Reformism," contained one error of formulation. We wrote, "The working class is not simply trade unionist, it is spontaneously revolutionary." We went on to add, "Spontaneity is no answer; leadership by the revolutionary party, the proletarian vanguard, is decisive- the crucial question of our times."

In looking back on this article last year, in the context of a faction fight occurring in our fraternal Australian section (see P.R. No. 46), we did indeed note that there had been a contradiction between the two sentences within the article. As well, the picture caption (see page 9 of this pamphlet) stated "Workers are spontaneously revolutionary -- if there is a vanguard willing to draw uncompromising lessons from such struggles."

Our intention was to emphasize that the working class isn't just spontaneously trade unionist but is capable of revolutionary consciousness and is the class source of that consciousness. However, the Marxist term "spontaneity" refers to non-revolutionary activity or struggle. It is wrong to say that the working class is or can be "spontaneously revolutionary." Workers can not reach revolutionary communist consciousness spontaneously, but only through the work of building the revolutionary proletarian party. That is indeed the main point of the article.

Workers Power (Britain):

A Powerless Answer to Reformism

As we go to press, the year-long British coal miners' strike, so crucial for the class struggle in this period, is reported to be ending. This article was written while the strike was still on and takes up theoretical and strategic questions fundamental to it.

In two recent issues of this journal we dissected a book by the British Workers Power group (WP) on Stalinism in the Soviet Union and its post-World War II expansion.¹ We argued that WP's position was only a left-sounding attempt to explain the inexplicable: how anti-working class Stalinism is supposed to be able to make socialist revolutions. We concluded, "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."

As if to prove this conclusion correct, Workers Power has issued a new major document, its "Theses on Reformism: the Bourgeois Workers' Party,"² which seeks to do for social democratic reformism what the book did for Stalinism. In this case it is of course impossible to rationalize revolutions made by social democrats, since there have been none. But it is possible, under the guise of an attack on counterrevolutionary reformism, to provide a justification for subordinating revolutionary politics to it.

Once again WP sounds very left. Its theses are directed not to those who idolize Stalinism or reformism but rather to politically advanced people who detest both ideologies and seek a revolutionary road. WP delivers a blistering attack against the right-centrist pseudo-Trotskyists who capitulate to social democracy. On the British scene it aims to reach militants who do not want to bury themselves in the Labour Party swamp or accept Tony Benn's left nationalism in lieu of the revolutionary program. WP relies heavily on quotations and paraphrases from Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky. But the lessons of these communist teachers are bowdlerized and made mechanical -- thus turned on their heads.

The very leftism of its cover is why such centrism cannot be ignored. The centrists of the past whom today's leftists disdain as unspeakable traitors to the proletariat -- the Kautskys, Martovs, etc. -- were themselves once declared revolutionaries, but their ultimate role was to leave the working class in the hands of counterrevolutionary reformism. Our task is to make sure this doesn't happen again.

The Contradiction in Reformism

Workers Power's answer to reformism begins by making a tremendous concession to it: WP believes that reformism is in part a "social gain" of the working class and a product of the proletariat's development as a class.

"A revolutionary understanding of reformism ... must encompass both the recognition of its counter-revolutionary, bourgeois character and its origins as a working class gain, made in the class struggle" (page 52).



British cops defending scabs from striking miners. Reformists say state is neutral. Revolutionaries say reformists lie, and cops prove it.

This idea is not a momentary formulation; it is repeated frequently in slightly different forms. For example, the article advocates "a dialectical understanding of the historic development of reformism as a product of the class struggle but yet also as brake upon that struggle ..." (page 55). The plus side of reformism as a product of the class struggle originating in the proletariat is contrasted to its minus side, the "brake" originating in the bourgeoisie. This conception of the contradictory nature of reformism is central to the theses and is the key to the way WP understands the united front tactic, the cornerstone of its politics. But the idea that reformism's contradictions are fundamental -- that the contradiction between classes bisects this ideology -- is untrue and has never been the Marxist position.

At first glance, WP's characterization seems to derive from a failure to distinguish between reformist ideology and the parties that embody it. Indeed, the achievement of independent working-class parties in Britain, Germany, etc. were gains of the proletariat, created in the course of the class struggle. Ref-

ormism arose in opposition to Marxism as a tendency denigrating the "final goal" -- socialism -- that the class struggle aimed at. It argued that the daily struggle for reforms alone was sufficient to democratize capitalism and meet the needs of the workers.

Reformism was designed to prevent the workers' (limited) organizational independence from the bourgeoisie from advancing to political independence -- for the latter points to the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois society. Forms of reformism dominated the British Labour Party from the start and came to dominate the German Social Democratic Party after a time. It is these parties, not reformism, that reveal the basic class contradiction within capitalism. Their major contradiction is between the reformism of their leadership and the proletarian nature of their social bases.

Reformism is not always embodied in an independent working-class party. In the United States, for example, there is reformism aplenty in the labor movement and on the left, but it stays within the bourgeois Democratic Party. In the neo-colonial world, reformism exists without resting upon independent parties created by the class struggle. Labor-linked politicians and bourgeois nationalists like Walter Mondale and Guillermo Ungo are examples. Of course, when the workers do break free of the liberal reformers, these types strive to limit class independence to organizational forms; they construct reformist parties on a working-class base to block the road to revolutionary consciousness. Their bourgeois origin shows the true nature of reformism, an alien parasitic growth that fastens on the working class in order to halt its movement and development.

Reformism Means False Consciousness

The reformist parties do embody historic gains made by the working class, but they use these gains against the workers. Their leaders become solidified as political bargaining agents within the system, resting upon the myth that the workers' gains were won through electoralism rather than class struggle. The reformists teach that reforms prove the viability of capitalism, in contrast to revolutionaries, who teach that the gains show the power of the workers to overcome a system fundamentally inimical to them.

In sum, reformism is the ideology, i.e. false consciousness, produced by bourgeois society to contain class struggles: to deny their importance, offset them and finally break them. It is an invasive ideology, not simply another view within the working class as claimed by the magnanimous pluralists of WP. It is no "gain of the working class" at all.

There are of course divisions (contradictions, if you will) within reformism; the British Labour Party is rife with them. They may even reflect the fundamental class division but they are not the class schism itself; they are disputes among the reformists over how best to prevent the contradiction between classes from manifesting itself in struggle. The "left" of

Tony Benn will be reconciled to the Labour right when struggle breaks out and will capitulate to it. Trotsky foresaw this in the 1920s, Benn has already done it when Labour was in power in the 1970s, and he is doing it again in the coal miners' strike (as Workers Power's press itself often proves). We will return to examples of the Labour Party and WP in practice.

Reformism flourishes in periods of social peace, when the contradiction between the proletarian base and the reformist top is eased. But further mass eruptions can break this harmony along the fault line, proving to large, even decisive, sections of workers that reformism as a whole is hostile to the class's needs. This is what happened in the 1917-21 period of revolutionary upheaval in Europe, when the (then revolutionary) Communist Parties were created by splitting the corrupted Social Democracies.

The Class Nature of Reformism

WP's real problem is not its apparent confusion between the class contradictions inside a reformist workers' party and the reconcilable differences within reformist ideology. Rosa Luxemburg was right when she posed the question in class terms in 1899, well before reformism's worst betrayals. "The question of reform and revolution, of the final goal and the movement, is basically, in another form, only the question of the petty bourgeois or proletarian character of the labor movement."³

Reformism may indeed be an outlook, even the predominant one, within the working class at any given time. Marxists have always understood that this is a passing matter; its duration may be long or short, but it does not represent the historic outlook of the proletariat. The fundamental interests of the workers are not tied to capitalism, a decaying social system that can survive in its epoch of decline only by ever more brutally bleeding the working masses.

On the other hand, the petty bourgeoisie has material interests deeply rooted in capitalist society. Its inevitable outlook is to reform the system's inequities and to work for class peace through class collaboration. These are utopian hopes and in the end will not help the petty bourgeoisie any more than the workers, but its situation provides an element of reality behind the illusion that there exist possible alternatives between the capitalists and the workers. Of course, in times of deep capitalist crisis layers of the petty bourgeoisie are hurled into the working class or below and can follow a revolutionary proletarian alternative. (As well, individual petty-bourgeois and middle-class people can become revolutionaries long before and can tie their lives and their politics to the proletariat -- by breaking from the interests and views of their classes of origin.)

Workers Power avoids Luxemburg's class distinction between petty-bourgeois reformism and proletarian revolutionism. Likewise it avoids the term "petty-bourgeois party" often used by Lenin and Trotsky for a reformist party. Instead WP uses "bourgeois

workers party." This of course is not in itself wrong (and it too was used by Lenin and Trotsky): the parties do have a working-class base and do serve the bourgeoisie. But WP's constant use of the latter formula and its studied non-use of the former avoids making clear just who controls the reformist party in the interests of capitalism.

The members of the bourgeoisie itself rarely get their hands dirty and join labor parties. Layers of the petty bourgeoisie do their work for them. In the reformist parties there abound direct representatives of the liberal petty bourgeoisie in close collaboration with their counterparts in the union bureaucracy. For Marxists, the labor aristocracy, the base of the bureaucracy, is an alien petty-bourgeois intrusion into the proletariat, materially and ideologically "tied by a thousand threads" to other middle layers. Trotsky gave a different, scientific description in discussing the leadership of the British Labour Party: "the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, including of course the labor aristocrats and bureaucrats."⁴

Workers to Blame for Reformism?

The petty-bourgeois characterization of reformist parties is more precise than "bourgeois workers party." On the one hand, "petty-bourgeois" specifies the dominant layer of the party; on the other, it subtracts no content, since petty-bourgeois ideology is a form of, not distinct from, bourgeois ideology. But WP rejects the traditional term without ever explaining or even mentioning the difference. Why? Because WP disagrees with the formula "petty-bourgeois workers party." For WP, reformism is not the outlook of layers of the petty bourgeoisie; it has its origin and base in the working class itself.

For example, while the theses refer to the labor aristocracy as a "caste" of the working class, its petty-bourgeois nature goes entirely unmentioned. As well, WP explains the origin of European reformist parties as the result of workers' "pressure for reform" (page 50, twice) -- rather than the reformists' need to hold back the workers' struggles with their socialist implications. Despite an occasional qualification that the reformists' victory is "by no means an inevitability" (page 51), Workers Power holds that the workers get what they fight for -- not that the underlying aspirations they fight for are betrayed. Thus WP blames the workers' consciousness for their reformist misleaders:

"... in the course of struggles, new leaders, often of a militant left reformist variety, are thrown up. While different tactics may be necessary in relation to such leaders, they are not qualitatively different from the entrenched, conservative bureaucracy. They reflect the consciousness of the workers who elect them. As such they represent, and become the means of maintaining, the reformist limitations of the consciousness of these workers." (page 57, emphasis added)

In plain words, the benighted workers get what they deserve. This opinion WP justifies by a quotation from Trotsky on the Labour Party in the 1920s, which is worth repeating in full:

"The left-wingers reflect the discontent of the British working class. As yet it is ill-defined, and they express its profound and persistent endeavor to break away from Baldwin-MacDonald in left-oppositional phrases entailing no obligations whatsoever. They transform the political helplessness of the awakening masses into an ideological maze. They constitute an expression of the forward move, but also act as a brake on it."⁵

Notice WP's sleight-of-hand. Trotsky is discussing workers whose consciousness is moving leftward but who are confused by their left-reformist leaders; the leaders are forced to reflect the workers' forward motion in order to hold back the masses' advance. In contrast WP suggests that while the new leaders move left they do so only within the limits of the workers' consciousness; the workers delimit the advance of the leaders and thereby in effect hold them back! Indeed, note that for WP the workers get the blame not only for the new militant left leaders but also for the "entrenched, conservative bureaucracy," the leftists' close kin. For Trotsky it is the reformist leaders who set the reformist limitations; for WP the leaders simply enforce limits set by the masses.

A decade later Trotsky dealt with the same kind of argument from a centrist writer, in his famous essay on "The Class, the Party and the Leadership":

"A false policy of the masses is explained by the "immaturity" of the masses. But what is "immaturity" of the masses? Obviously, their predisposition to false policies. Just what the false policy consisted of, and who were its initiators, the masses or the leaders -- that is passed over in silence by our author. By means of tautology, he unloads the responsibility on the masses. This classical trick of all traitors, deserters and their attorneys is especially revolting in connection with the Spanish proletariat."⁶

Workers Power makes use of the same "classical trick of all traitors" but more openly: it blames the wrong policies on the masses specifically. Its argumentation is precisely that of attorneys for the counterrevolutionary traitors.

Lenin on Consciousness

To buttress its view WP cites Lenin's "famous and still contentious passage" in "What Is To Be Done?": "The spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism, is Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei, and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie."⁷

Since "trade unionism" is a form of reformism, this passage appears to support WP's position that reformism stems from the limitations of the workers

themselves. It obviously requires a closer look, for WP is entirely correct on one point: this passage (like others related to it) is indeed contentious.

We first note that Lenin's statement here has been rejected in particular by Tony Cliff, the leader of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which Workers Power broke from in the mid-1970s. A "rank and filist" like Cliff⁸ has a vested interest in claiming that the working class is inherently socialist, not reformist -- not because of his profound faith in the capacity of the proletariat to reach revolutionary consciousness, but for the opposite reason. His strategy is to tailor his operative program to the reform and union militancy demands the workers spontaneously raise under many circumstances; the SWP's expectation is that even these backward, reformist views will, if carried out consistently, lead to socialism. Hence Cliff's interpretation of Lenin is a cover for tailing working-class backwardness.

WP broke from Cliffism in an attempt to bring itself closer to Trotskyism, rejecting among other things Cliff's view of Lenin. But as we will show, WP failed to transcend Cliff's adaptation to backwardness, succeeding only in giving it a far-left form.

Lenin's Revised Opinion

In citing Lenin, WP had the responsibility to carry his thought to its conclusion. If the working class is capable only of trade-unionist ideas, where does revolutionary consciousness come from? Unlike WP, Lenin didn't dodge the question in "What Is To Be Done?"; he approvingly cited the then-orthodox conception of Kautsky and Plekhanov that scientific socialism is brought to the working class from outside, by bourgeois intellectuals. This is no small matter at all and is the basis for the real contentiousness of Lenin's formulation!

Had WP completed Lenin's thought it would have had to make its own theses more naked: reformism originates in the proletariat, revolutionism in the intelligentsia. This doesn't look very leftist, so it wasn't made explicit. But it is the meaning of WP's point of view. Where else can socialist consciousness come from? The upper bourgeoisie? The peasantry? The Queen? No: once WP starts with its ideas of the workers' limitations and with its citation from Lenin, there can be no other conclusion.

Lenin, however, changed his opinion. As Trotsky explained,

"According to Lenin's representations, the labor movement, when left to its own devices, was inclined irrevocably toward opportunism; revolutionary class-consciousness was brought to the proletariat from the outside, by Marxist intellectuals. ... The author of ["What Is to Be Done?"] himself subsequently acknowledged the biased nature, and therewith the erroneousness, of his theory, which he had parenthetically interjected as a battery in the battle against

"Economism" and its deference to the elemental nature of the labor movement."⁹

There are several well known statements by Lenin to back up Trotsky's conclusion. One comes in a summary article about the 1905 revolution: "At every step the workers come face to face with their main enemy -- the capitalist class. In combat with this enemy the worker becomes a socialist, comes to realize the necessity of a complete reconstruction of the whole of society, the complete abolition of all poverty and all oppression."¹⁰

An earlier reference came during the revolution itself (here "Social-Democracy" is the pre-1917 name for the party of revolutionaries, later called communists):

"The working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social-Democratic, and more than ten years of work put in by Social-Democracy has done a great deal to transform this spontaneity into consciousness."¹¹

We note as a matter of interest that Cliff, in his biography of Lenin, cites both of these passages but elects to cut the second one off after the comma.¹² Thus he turns the leader Lenin into the tailist Cliff. Workers Power, in bringing up the question without carrying Lenin's views forward, commits an equal distortion.

Lenin here was not saying the same thing as in "What Is to be Done?". These passages reflect the new understanding he operated on for the rest of his life, an understanding Trotsky came to share. The working class is not simply spontaneously trade-unionist, it is spontaneously revolutionary. However, since the proletariat develops at different rates, if the most advanced workers do not intervene to lead the backward layers, then revolutionary consciousness will not be achieved by the class as a whole. Spontaneity is no answer; leadership by the revolutionary party, the proletarian vanguard, is decisive -- the crucial question of our times. But leadership is a relation within the working class, not between intellectuals and proletarians. Building the Marxist party to lead the class is the only way to defeat the alien intrusion of petty-bourgeois ideology.

This very question illustrates the relationship between the proletariat and revolution that we have been arguing for. And it occurs even where communist leaders themselves have come from non-proletarian backgrounds. Lenin first recognized the inherent revolutionary capacity of the working class through of the 1905 revolution -- that is, as a lesson taught him by the proletariat itself. Similarly the workers and artisans of the Paris Commune had taught Marx and Engels the need for revolution to smash the bourgeois state apparatus, not simply take it over. The motto "learn from the masses" was corrupted into a patronizing lie by Maoists and other petty-bourgeois misleaders. But just as there is no revolutionary practice without revolutionary theory, there is no basis



Miners heroically battling police. Leninists know that *such workers are spontaneously revolutionary -- if there is a vanguard willing to draw uncompromising lessons from such struggles.*

for genuine revolutionary theory without living class struggle as a guide.

Til the Final Conflict

The Cliff tradition has as its hallmark the development of a "rank and file" opposition to the trade union bureaucrats. It echoes the current level of consciousness not of the most advanced workers, the Marxists, but of the union militants. It appeals to backward workers -- obviously not the most backward, since it is not aimed at the right reformists or openly pro-bourgeois workers. And as Trotsky pointed out, adaptation to backward or immature consciousness of layers of the working class in reality means capitulation to the treacherous bureaucratic misleaders and their reformist programs.

Workers Power is also rank and filist, an immediate sign that its break from Cliffism is incomplete, for the notion is foreign to the Trotskyist method and tradition. WP's version, naturally, is further left. It doesn't seek to establish programmatic identity with the current level of militant consciousness. WP rejects the assumption that militant trade union consciousness carried out consistently will bring workers to socialism. For WP, reformist illusions are a product of the limitations of the working class's outlook, limitations which the Cliffites formally (only formally) deny.

WP learned the problem with Cliff's method in its own experience in the SWP, which tried in the early 1970s to recruit raw militant "rank and file" workers. Under such conditions the party becomes a mere pressure group for the rank and filists upon the reformist leaders. WP believes that until the masses of workers follow the revolutionary party, which must keep its program well above current spontaneous illusions, they will remain reformist. The party is the carrier of revolutionary consciousness:

"Revolutionaries cannot content themselves with merely arguing for better and more effective ways of winning the spontaneous demands of the workers. Even where such demands have a progressive content (which is not always the case) it is the duty of revolutionaries to link the struggle for them to the historic mission of the proletariat, the conquest of state power." (page 56)

But Workers Power, as we have seen, accepts reformism as the normal response of the workers. Thus the conjuncture between the working class masses and its revolutionary mission will not occur until the very eve of revolution. The need for the revolutionary nucleus to organize its core cadre, iron out its tactics and criticize its foes remains constant:

"This alternative leadership can not triumph all at once but [only] partially, unevenly at first. Only finally does this struggle become one of

conflict between mass parties, between sections of the proletariat grouped under the banners of reform or revolution." (pages 60-61, emphasis added)

A fatalistic and mechanistic outlook indeed, undoubtedly derived from living with the particular history of the British Labour Party. The workers, the class ultimately responsible for reformism, remain near-permanently in its grip. The significant section of the masses joins the revolutionary leadership "only finally," when mass conflict is the order of the day. Fortunately, however, such a scenario is not only discouraging and mechanistic, it is also entirely wrong -- just as wrong as the opposite notion that reformism grows over into revolutionism automatically.

The answer to Workers Power's theory of "reformism until the final conflict" is the same as to the question of the class origin of reformism: the proletariat itself contains the potential for growing over from reformist to revolutionary consciousness.

Working-class consciousness in reality is a mixed phenomenon. Different layers come to a more advanced understanding at different times and rates; even workers with quite definite petty-bourgeois, conservative ideas frequently have aspirations which require revolution to fulfill. The resolution of the contradiction comes through action, class movement, struggle. For altered consciousness derives from practice rather than the other way around. That is, a change in the material condition of the class through struggle leads to changes -- sometimes vast, overnight changes -- in political consciousness. It follows that significant sections of the masses may achieve revolutionary consciousness well before the final conflict, depending on the balance of class forces, the workers' victories and defeats, the ebbs and flows of the class struggle. This Marxist understanding is a far cry from WP's mechanistic pessimism.

The Permanent United Front

The inevitability of reformism thesis dictates WP's conception of the united-front tactic. This tactic has always been a central feature of its politics, ranging from everyday purposes in Britain to the "anti-imperialist united front," -- a class-collaborationist bloc it advocates in neo-colonial countries. (We have polemicized against this last position as held by WP's Irish co-thinkers, the Irish Workers Group.¹³)

In Britain, WP's united-front tactic takes the form of permanent critical electoral support to the Labour Party. Leninists understand that electoral support for reformist parties that were created by the working class is a principled and necessary tactic -- when the promises or deeds of the leaders have succeeded in convincing the mass of workers in motion that electing them will do the working class good. Such support is by no means automatic, as Trotsky once noted succinctly:

"The possibility of betrayal is always contained in reformism. But this does not mean that reformism and betrayal are one and the same thing at every moment. Not quite. Temporary agreements may be made with the reformists whenever they take a step forward. But to maintain a bloc with them when, frightened by the development of a movement, they commit treason, is equivalent to criminal toleration of traitors and a veiling of betrayal."¹⁴

Yet Workers Power has given critical support to Labour even when the reformists were taking giant steps backward in an effort to break working class movement. It called for the re-election of the Callaghan government, the Labour government that was engaged in busting a mass strike wave in 1978-79 and so prepared the ground for the massive attacks the workers have suffered under the present Thatcher regime. (In much the same way Jimmy Carter's austerity program in the U.S. both set the stage for Reaganism and helped get Reagan elected.) WP's justification for this policy comes, they say, from Trotsky(!):

"The tactic [of critical electoral support to reformist parties] has to continue to be used so long as the masses have not broken from their reformist leaders, even where revolutionaries might believe that the workers have already experienced enough to turn against them, a point once again made by Trotsky ..." (page 90)

And there follow a few lines of Trotsky's which explain that the question of electoral support depends not on the revolutionaries' consciousness but the masses'. Indeed, past reformist betrayals are not enough to deny critical support if the masses do not see their significance. But when the betrayals are immediate, the present deeds of the party in power, and when the workers in struggle are turning away from their betrayers...! It is again a matter of the WP's idea of mass reformist consciousness which does not change even when the class is in motion. So in 1979 WP committed "criminal toleration of traitors and a veiling of betrayal." It gave the following excuse in its press at the time:

"As long as the masses wish to keep 'their' parties in government rather than allow the open bourgeois parties to rule we support this elementary act of class consciousness."¹⁵

Again, WP blames its toleration of traitors on the workers -- and calls it "class consciousness," because reformism is precisely WP's idea of what mass class consciousness is. Compare this passive fatalism with Trotsky:

"The tactic of the united front still retains all its power as the most important method in the struggle for the masses. A basic principle of this tactic is: "With the masses -- always; with the vacillating leaders -- sometimes, but only so long as they stand at the head of the masses." It is necessary to make use of vacillating leaders while the masses are pushing them ahead ... And

it is necessary to break with them at the right time when they turn from vacillation to hostile action and betrayal. It is necessary to use the occasion of the break to expose the traitorous leaders and to contrast their position to that of the masses. It is precisely in this that the revolutionary essence of the united front policy consists."¹⁶

Trotsky's method demands a careful, selective use of the united-front tactic, basing it on the dynamic of working-class movement and consciousness -- in particular, on the potential for the party to teach lessons to less advanced workers in the course of actual experience. WP's static approach accepts as unvarying and natural the workers' support for reformists even if this means teaching the workers the wrong lesson: back the reformists whether or not they are betraying a live movement.

We offer one more salutary quotation:

"The series of related tactics that have become known as the united front must not be allowed to usurp their subordinate function. Any theory or practice which assigns to the united front, either in one of its forms, or via a series of united fronts, the role of an unbroken road to socialism is ipso facto unprincipled and can only lead to the systematic and progressive abandonment of the revolutionary program. With iron necessity it leads to the negation of the independent and conscious role of the working class in its own emancipation. It progressively downgrades and renounces in practice the role of a revolutionary party. It turns the united front from a weapon against reformism into a pretext for ideological surrender to, and organizational liquidation into, reformism."

Exactly. The permanent united front strategy leads straight to the abandonment of the revolutionary party, the fundamental strategy for Leninists. It does this by denying the centrality and development of working-class consciousness. This quotation reads as a far-sighted warning aimed almost unerringly at WP's specific practice; it reflects ideas permeating Trotsky's work. Ironically it comes from Workers Power's own theses (pages 59-60). The (self-)criticism of using the united front as an "unbroken road to socialism" is particularly telling when read in connection with another united-front tactic discussed below, the workers' government.

For Marxists the real proofs are in practice, not theory. In the 1978-79 strike wave in Britain, WP steadfastly refused to call for a general strike.¹⁷ It calls for general strikes at other times but never under a Labour government, because such a strike poses the question of which class holds state power, not just who holds office for the bourgeoisie. A general strike would have destroyed the Labour government, and that's why WP held back. Its fatalistic attitude toward the permanence of reformism leads inevitably to defending it instead of fighting for revolutionary consciousness through the mass struggle.

The latter always seems premature and "sectarian." For additional examples, we will take up WP's activity in the miners' strike later in this article.

The Labor Party in the United States

The theses contain a long section on the "labor party tactic" based on the history of this question in the American Communist and Trotskyist parties. It is a subject we are very familiar with, not only because we are U.S.-based Trotskyists but because our tendency was born out of a struggle in which the labor party question came to the forefront.¹⁸ This section of Workers Power's theses proves just how badly they have to twist history and politics to justify their method.

WP's permanent support for the Labour Party translates to the American scene as a permanent call for a labor party in the United States. This has in fact been the position of all American pseudo-Trotskyists, stemming from misinterpretations of Trotsky's first advocacy of the labor party tactic in 1938 for the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. Trotsky urged a positive response to the growing mass pressure to move the victorious labor struggles that created the militant CIO unions onto the political plane. His tactic was linked specifically to circumstances; previously, under different conditions in the 1920s and again in 1932, he had opposed using the labor party slogan.

According to WP, he changed his mind in principle between 1932 and 1938: "Trotsky developed the Labor Party tactic by transcending his own previous objections" (page 78). Specifically, WP claims that in 1932 Trotsky thought that "the Labor Party could only be conceived of as a reformist party."

"Trotsky's view boiled down to the proposition that the Labor Party was either unnecessary or reactionary. It would prove unnecessary if there was a mass upsurge of revolutionary consciousness -- in which case a mass communist party would be formed. It would be reactionary if the trade union leaders were able to dominate the movement. This view was much less dialectical than his later position, since it excluded a situation which combined these phenomena -- where the mass pressure for a Labor Party could be turned against the reformist leaders." (pages 77-78)

But this is not the case at all. Workers Power is so unable to recognize a temporary, flexible tactic that it overlooks practically everything Trotsky had to say on the question, or else deliberately chooses its citations selectively and dishonestly. First of all, Trotsky specifically stated in 1932 that an American labor party did not have to be reformist (although at that time he thought the reformist possibility was the more likely):

"One can say that under the American conditions a labor party in the British sense would be a progressive step, and by recognizing this and stating so, we ourselves, even though indirectly, help to establish such a party. But that is

precisely the reason I will never assume the responsibility to affirm abstractly and dogmatically that the creation of a labor party would be a 'progressive step' even in the United States, because I do not know under what circumstances, under what guidance, and for what purposes that party would be created.

"It seems to me more probable that especially in America, which does not possess any important traditions of independent political action by the working class (as Chartism in England, for example) and where the trade union bureaucracy is more reactionary and corrupted than it was at the height of the British Empire, the creation of a labor party could be provoked only by mighty revolutionary pressure from the working masses and by the growing threat of Communism. It is absolutely clear that under these conditions the labor party would signify, not a progressive step but a hindrance to the progressive evolution of the working class."¹⁹

Trotsky Undialectical?

Trotsky was arguing that a labor party would probably be reformist, not that it inevitably had to be so. Although conditions changed, his reasoning is still useful today. Workers Power quotes the last few lines of this passage, leaving out the words we have emphasized above in order to make the Trotsky they disagree with sound dogmatic and undialectical. But Trotsky understood the labor party tactic perfectly dialectically in 1932 even when he was opposed to using it; this is our second point:

"That the labor party can become an arena of successful struggle for us and that the labor party, created as a barrier to Communism, can under certain circumstances strengthen the Communist Party, is true, but only under the condition that we consider the labor party not as 'our' party but as an arena in which we are acting as an absolutely independent Communist Party."²⁰

There is nothing in this resembling WP's undialectical "unnecessary or reactionary" counterposition, only a principled flexibility of tactics.

Third, even when Trotsky reassessed the class situation, he repeated that the previous position had been correct at the time. In discussions with American SWP leaders in 1938, he stated:

"When for the first time the Communist League [the Trotskyist organization of the period] considered this question, some seven or eight years ago -- whether we should favor a labor party or not, whether we should develop initiative on this score -- then the prevailing sentiment was not to do it, and that was absolutely correct."²¹

Lastly, Trotsky "transcended" his previous objections only because the conditions of the workers' struggle developed dramatically between 1932 and 1938

— not because he developed some new principle. There occurred first the rise of the CIO and then the movement's impasse, making political action unavoidable as well as necessary. In opposition to the union leaders (including the Stalinist CP) who wanted to support the bourgeois Democratic president Franklin Roosevelt, the SWP called for an independent working-class party, a labor party based on the unions -- the vehicle through which the mass class movement was flowing. The SWP sought a way to align itself with militant workers open to having revolutionary ideas proved to them in practice.

The Labor Party Slogan Today

Why then does WP insist that Trotsky's principles, not just his tactics, changed between 1932 and 1938? Clearly because their theory of the inevitability of reformism mandates a similar stance for the U.S. — since the Americans have no labor party, the tactic of calling for one is perennially necessary.

"By 1938 Trotsky had developed the Labor Party tactic into its most refined revolutionary form. The guidelines that he laid down remain valid today. ... Periods of economic crisis and sharpening class struggle are the most favorable for raising the Labor Party slogan. However, even during 'calm periods' the slogan retains a propagandistic value and can be acted upon agitationaly in local situations or elections. For example, against support for a Democratic candidate in an election, revolutionaries would call on the unions to field an independent working class candidate." (page 79)

This tactic makes little sense in the U.S. today. In order for the labor party tactic to succeed conditions must change, almost as much as in the 1930s. The labor party slogan is useful when the workers are in motion, when they are seeking a political solution and when a section (at least) of the labor bureaucracy has moved left in an attempt to channel the movement back to reformism. Then it would be necessary for revolutionaries to join an open-ended labor party movement to get the reformists hands off it.

But today there is no left section of the bureaucracy; all wings compete to see which can capitulate most rapidly to the bourgeoisie and austerity. No doubt a left wing will emerge, sooner or later, but it's not around now. And when it does appear it will be an attempt to squelch or forestall a workers' movement -- so again it is possible that "the labor party would signify, not a progressive step but a hindrance to the progressive evolution of the working class." We cannot yet determine the coming balance of forces, but that does not prove Trotsky's earlier position wrong under future circumstances. Workers Power cites Trotsky's words from the early 1930s in order to show how wrong they were for the late 1930s — but it does not occur to them how prophetic they are for circumstances like today's.

That is why WP's allegedly Trotskyist agitational

tactic makes no sense. (In Bolshevik terminology, "agitation" means addressing concrete ideas to a wide audience, in contrast to "propaganda," more complex ideas for a necessarily narrower audience.) It is possible to use a related but different tactic propagandistically: when a labor bureaucrat speaks to workers on behalf of a Democratic candidate, revolutionaries might point out that if the bureaucrats were serious about labor's interests they would form their own party; but of course they are not. To call on such traitors to form a party or to run their own candidates, now, is to call for electoral action, not mass struggle. It plays along with the reformists' present tactic of parliamentary diversions as an alternative to any and all mass class actions.

In last year's presidential election, the union bureaucrats were the first off the mark to tie themselves to Democrat Walter Mondale, except those committed to Reagan and the handful for Jesse Jackson. He was known far and wide as labor's candidate in the Democratic primaries and the election. Mondale and AFL-CIO chief Lane Kirkland were equally embarrassed by their inability to find a single political difference between them. There were of course leftists who shared WP's general method and called on the unions to run a labor candidate. The response? "We already have one: Walter Mondale." Such people could only counterpose the slogan, "Mondale via a Labor Party, not the Democrats." A worse joke is hard to imagine.

Before we move on, we must ask WP to identify just where Leon Trotsky "laid down" the guidelines it alleges. As a possible tactic for use at the proper time, of course. But as a permanent slogan, usable agitationaly "even during calm periods" as WP says? No; in fact, in the 1940 presidential election Trotsky did not use his new transcendent permanent labor party tactic. He called on the SWP to support Earl Browder, the Communist Party man, for the tactical reason that the CP at that instant was moving left. A layer of very advanced workers was ignited by the CP's new-found pseudo-anti-imperialism and could be won to genuine communism through such a tactic. Trotsky was a tactician of skill, always seeking to win the most advanced workers by going through actual experiences with them. He was no petty maneuverist who tails backward consciousness until the big day bye and bye.

The Transitional Program

For all its distortions and the political logic that sets it up to capitulate to reformism, Workers Power tries hard to maintain a position to the left of reformism. Indeed, on all questions covered -- the united front, electoral support, the labor party -- WP seeks to criticize and oppose the reformists' programs and establish an independent political basis for its separate existence. Precisely how it opposes reformism, and with what alternative, is therefore a critical question.

Does Workers Power counterpose the revolutionary

program to reformism? Its leftism would make one assume so, but life is not so simple. At one point the theses warn, not only against accommodation to reformist politics when working inside a reformist party, but also that:

"An unwillingness to take part in limited struggles for partial, non-revolutionary objectives and the counter-posing of the revolutionary program when the workers have not yet been won to it leads to the opposite danger of sectarianism. (page 82, emphasis added)

Of course, there are many situations when counter-posing the revolutionary program to a struggle for reforms would be entirely wrong. On the other hand, posing the revolutionary program propagandistically (and counterposing it to the reformist program) is always necessary for Marxists. That WP is arguing against the latter in the guise of the former is clear from its justification: "the workers have not yet been won." When the workers do not yet accept the revolutionary program, communists, it seems, ought not to raise it either. And remember, for WP the workers won't become revolutionary until the final days before the revolution. So it appears that the revolutionary program isn't about to get much exposure.

But how can this be? WP often says things like "communists put forward their own program, counterposing it to the reformist program" (page 88). This looks like a whopping contradiction -- until you realize just what WP means by "their own program." They mean the "Transitional Program" written by Trotsky and adopted by the Fourth International in 1938. Moreover, WP understands that this is not the revolutionary program.

The usual pseudo-Trotskyist assumption is that the Transitional Program is and was intended to be "the program of the Fourth International." It is not: the Transitional Program was designed to be a bridge to the revolutionary program for masses of workers in struggle. Trotsky made this clear enough at several points in the document itself and especially in the discussions of it with his followers:

"The draft program is not a complete program. ... the end of the program is not complete, because we don't speak here about the social revolution, about the seizure of power by insurrection, the transformation of capitalist society into the dictatorship [of the proletariat], the dictatorship into socialist society. This brings the reader only to the doorstep. It is a program for action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution."²²

Why did the Transitional Program lead the workers "only to the doorstep" of the socialist revolution? Because Trotsky wanted the door slammed in their faces? Obviously not. At the time he wrote, the Fourth International was known as the uncompromisingly revolutionary party. Its task was not to endlessly repeat the revolutionary goal but to convince masses of its significance. Trotsky wrote a "bridge" program

as a substitute for the old social-democratic "minimal" program, complementary to the revolutionary program of socialism. The bridge was meant to guide the workers to the point where socialism and the proletarian dictatorship could be proven in practice, by masses in motion, to be necessary goals:

"The old 'minimal program' is superseded by the transitional program, the task of which lies in systematic mobilization of the masses for the proletarian revolution."²³

The Transitional Program had a particular use for tactical intervention in reformist parties. As Trotsky observed, "We propagandize this program in the trade unions, propose it as the basic program for the labor party. For us, it is a transitional program; but for them it is the program."²⁴ That is, they, unlike us, do not fight for the revolutionary program as well.

The Workers' Government Slogan

Nevertheless, the fact that Trotsky left the program incomplete has enabled centrists to use it as a weapon against revolution. Key to its abuse is the "workers' government" slogan, a tactic similar in many respects to the labor party slogan. It was designed by the early Comintern based on the tactics used by the Bolsheviks in 1917 on their road to revolutionary victory. The slogan calls for a workers' "government" rather than "state" in order to push the non-revolutionary parties to the limit without demanding the impossible, that they become revolutionary and create a new state. It challenges reformist parties to follow the logic of their proclaimed "socialist" programs and take over the bourgeois state machine in the interests of the workers (and with the workers' armed support), without concessions to the capitalists. Clearly such an eventuality would be highly explosive and momentary; it would lead quickly to a revolutionary crisis.

We have outlined this history and the theory behind it in our analysis of "The Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program."²⁵ But as we noted at the time (1979):

"The workers' government slogan is central to the misuse of the Program because it has been used in fact as a substitute for the missing slogan of the workers' state. It is no coincidence that the organizations which make this substitution are the same ones that, thirty years ago, devised the theory that petty-bourgeois forces in Eastern Europe and China could substitute for the proletariat in making the socialist revolution."

Unfortunately this describes Workers Power exactly. WP does not propagandize for the proletarian dictatorship, the workers' state. It does not counterpose the socialist program of revolution to reformism. Instead it calls for workers' governments -- not tactically, during the occasional conjunctures when this slogan appropriately exposes the vacillation of reformist parties, but almost always. This policy is

presented in the final paragraph of WP's theses:

"In general, except in cases of revolutionary crisis in which the question of power is raised, communists raise the workers' government as propaganda for a real, revolutionary workers' government, while at the same time demanding of reformist parties in government that they take concrete steps to break with the bourgeoisie and act for the workers." (page 96)

WP is prepared to call for a revolutionary alternative to capitalist rule, the workers' state, only at the point of revolution -- when workers are already convinced of the necessity of overthrowing the bourgeois state. Until then, the revolutionary technique for convincing workers that the workers' state will be necessary is "propaganda for a ... workers' government." (We leave aside for now the "real, revolutionary" qualification given to this term.)

WP has it almost exactly backwards. When the mass of workers are not revolutionary, an essential task of communists is to win over the most advanced as revolutionary cadres. In the most extreme circumstances when class motion is only molecular, this can be accomplished only by explaining the most advanced Marxist conceptions to the few who can grasp them with a minimum of tactical maneuvering; it requires propaganda in the Bolshevik sense -- for the workers' state, among other things. The revolutionary program must be stated clearly and boldly so that cadres will have precise knowledge of what lies ahead.

Workers Power's Centrism

However, when there is mass movement and new layers of the working class are moving from backward to advanced consciousness, a more varied pedagogy is needed. Masses learn through experience, not only discourse. Marxist tactics are meant to help them see through their illusions without meeting unnecessary obstacles. The extreme situation is a revolutionary crisis, when it becomes possible to reach broader and more backward layers of workers than ever before with concrete ideas. Here tactical considerations come to the fore (but even then we must not skip over the vanguard by obliterating the revolutionary program), and the workers' government slogan may be useful.

WP's reversal of the two situations is characteristic of centrism; it maneuvers with Marxist truth instead of training the vanguard workers, and fools revolutionary workers (and itself) with the promise that "in the end" we will speak of true socialism. The end, of course, never comes.

It is possible, an attentive reader might suggest, that we are making too much of a mere terminological dispute. After all, when WP says "workers' government" instead of "workers' state," they actually say "real, revolutionary workers' government." Couldn't this have the same meaning as a workers' state?

Yes, it could for some -- but not for WP. There

are many on the left (like the Spartacist tendency) who allege that for communists "workers' government" can have no other meaning than "workers' state." This is wrong, however, and WP knows that it is. WP criticizes Zinoviev for equating the two, pointing out correctly that doing so "robs the slogan of its use as a united front" (page 92). But with this understanding that "workers' government" is a united-front slogan, Workers Power also ought to understand that its near-permanent workers' government slogan amounts to a near-permanent united front -- the strategy WP itself calls "ideological surrender"!

In sum, the "real, revolutionary" rhetoric again shows WP's leftism. It is not satisfied with Stalinist or social-democratic travesties; it wants a workers' government which will lead directly to a workers' state. But it does not want to say so in ad-

Without this dimension the whole exercise becomes a capitulation. It gives no leadership to the advanced layer of workers, the revolutionaries whose existence prior to the final conflict WP fails to take into account. But these are the workers whom the revolutionary party needs most of all. WP's method is to speak to relatively backward workers directly, instead of to advanced layers as a means of mobilizing the less advanced. Hence WP postpones not only the revolutionary program until the final days but the revolutionary party itself.

The party will not be created by fiat or by triumphal proclamation at some appointed day. It has to be patiently and painstakingly built over time, starting from the embryo of a propaganda group addressing itself to the advanced workers. As well, if it does



British dockers convincing fellow worker to respect picket line. Reformist union leaders block class unity during strike. Even miners' "left" bureaucrats refuse to push for general strike. Despite centrists' claim, reformism is a bane, no gain, for working class.

vance. As with the labor party in the U.S., by making a united-front tactic into its everyday slogan WP (in its own words: page 60, already cited) "assigns to the united front ... the role of an unbroken road to socialism," an act which is "unprincipled and can only lead to the systematic and progressive abandonment of the revolutionary program."

Whither Workers Power?

Communists must raise transitional demands as a crucial part of their action program to mobilize the masses. But they must be accompanied by precise propaganda addressed to the most advanced workers, pointing out that the real answer to the crises of capitalism lies not in the "bridge" demands of the Transitional Program (and certainly not in the leaders who won't even carry those out) but rather in the program and party of socialist revolution. We show the way not only to the bridge but to its far side; bridges by themselves can be crossed either way.

not always address this layer, its essence, the revolutionary program, will decay and collapse.

The Test of the Miners' Strike

The practical test of the year-long British miners' strike demonstrates Workers Power's failure to illuminate the revolutionary road. First of all, its criticisms of Arthur Scargill's leadership of the strike have been mild indeed (although far stronger than most of the centrist tendencies'). For example, WP continually calls not for a revolutionary leadership to replace the Scargill bureaucracy in the National Union of Miners but instead for a rank and file movement to transform the NUM through class-struggle militancy and workers' democracy. Early in the strike WP even urged Scargill to join in this effort:

"If Scargill and the left are not to become lifelong prisoners of their positions they should lend their weight to the building of such a

movement.

"Their record to date suggests they will not, but should they do so we should welcome them without sacrificing our independence to them and their positions."²⁶

Should they do so! WP invitingly allows for an unlikely possibility that the left union bureaucracy would cede its power in the union and control of the strike to the ranks who are fighting so heroically. But it is impossible, and not just because of "their record to date." It is because of their petty-bourgeois character, the fact that they serve capitalism and work for its preservation, not its destruction.

More recently WP has become more critical, but not because it recognizes the alien class nature of the reformists. Rather it sees Scargill as a bureaucrat limited by the narrow horizons of his office. This is how it explains Scargill's sellout deal with the TUC in September rather than forging a link with striking dockworkers and seizing "the best opportunity for kick-starting a general strike":

"The reason for this is exactly the same as the reason for the mistake over the national strike call. Scargill and the other leaders were not prepared to breach the norms of bureaucratic diplomacy by demanding that the leaders act and preparing to pass them by and go straight to the rank and file of the other unions if they failed to do so. The truth is that Scargill does not want to be placed in a similar situation when asked for support from other workers. He wants to make sure — that he is in control of any action taken by his members. To ensure this he sticks to the bureaucratic rules of the game with other leaders."²⁷

WP employs the anti-Trotskyist concept of pitting "the rank and file" against the bureaucrats because it sees both as functional positions within the working class. The class-decisive contradiction is between proletarian and petty-bourgeois leadership. The union bureaucracy, even its leftmost sections, is not simply a "caste" of the working class but a class intrusion that must be overturned.

That is why WP is soft on the Scargills. To the extent that WP ever mentions revolutionary leadership for the strike in its press (very rarely), it is raised as an image of more consistent militancy. But WP is careful not to counterpose it to Scargill in any foreseeable circumstance. Instead, even when NUM militants had become seriously disillusioned with their leaders' handling of the strike, WP concluded an "Open Letter from the Workers Power Editorial Board" with its incessant rank and filism:

"With the officials if possible, without them when necessary must be the battle cry of a re-born rank and file movement in the miners strike. The events of the last weeks show that many militants are no longer prepared to leave the running of the dispute to the NEC. It is from these ranks

that a force can be built to take the strike back onto the offensive and onto the road to victory."²⁸

Once again there is no call to replace Scargill by a revolutionary leadership. By not counterposing revolution to reform and by accepting the reformism's durability, WP restrains revolutionary minded workers from building the necessary opposition in the NUM.

This failure extends also to the Labour lefts. WP prides itself on its exposure of the right-centrists' adaptation to Tony Benn and its own refusal to bury itself, like them, in the Labour Party; as well, WP correctly condemns them for not raising the general strike slogan seriously and consistently. But WP does not tell the workers the full implications of a general strike and thereby explain why the others do not demand it: the general strike poses the question of state power -- which class, not just which

El Salvador: Revolution or Betrayal?

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bourgeois party, shall rule. Although WP poses the general strike agitationaly as a necessary defense of the unions under Thatcher's attacks, it typically refrains from going beyond this to clarify the revolutionary path a general strike would open up. For Marxists there is one crucial programmatic point at this stage: the necessity of a revolutionary party to fight for the leadership of the general strike.

Some months ago, however, WP elaborated a lengthy scenario for winning the strike.²⁹ This included having Labour come to power and then workers revolting against it when the Labour government tries to suppress their independence. And only then, at the point of revolution, did WP's scenario mention the necessity of a revolutionary party. For all its criticisms of Labour, for all the betrayals by Kinnock and Benn that it exposes, WP never once points out the need for the workers to destroy this reformist obstacle to their success. Thus Workers Power promises to carry out in practice its assumption about the inevitability of reformism.

Instead, as the struggle heated up, WP wrote the following, its boldest formulation yet:

"A tremendous fissure has opened up in the Labour Movement between the militant rank and file activists who have rallied to the miners and the bulk of the union officials, councillors and MPs who have not. This should not be cause for complaint — for laments about unity. ... An all out war is

needed to help the miners win and the quislings in our own ranks should be shown no mercy.

"In the unions first and foremost -- but necessarily and vitally in the Labour Party too -- the class fighters must be rallied for a life or death struggle against the class traitors. Then we shall see where the waverers and appeasers stand. This strike has shown the working class doesn't need a 'broad church.' It needs a mass party of the class struggle. It needs a party dedicated to overthrowing capitalism and able unequivocally to throw its full organized weight into each and every battle [against] the bosses. To this end the militant miners and all their supporters should dedicate themselves in 1985."³²

Despite all the fierce rhetoric, this is a deliberate muddle. What party does WP want -- a revolutionary party or a refurbished Labour Party? A party "dedicated to overthrowing capitalism" must be a revolutionary party. Marxists and many advanced workers know this, but WP as usual refuses to say explicitly that a revolutionary party must be built and treacherous Labour must be smashed. And since the argument stems from the "fissure in the Labour Movement" which includes MPs, WP is talking about a "war" to radicalize Labour. Without admitting it plainly, this position calls for a reconstituted Labour Party, an idea rejected in the theses because Trotsky rejected it so vehemently.

A further point: since the Labour Party is "necessarily and vitally" where the waverers and appeasers must be tested -- by what right does Workers Power stand outside the party where this decisive struggle must take place? Why does WP not counsel workers not in the Labour Party to join it and help wage the decisive fight? Why does WP abstain from this course itself? The political logic of WP's position is to join Labour and thereby edge into the left-Labourite embrace. This article almost says so, but its entire analysis of reformism points in that direction.

If reformism is inevitable until the final conflict, if reformism is a deformed gain of the working class, then despite WP's subjective leftism (which makes it reluctant to join the other pseudo-Trotskyists buried in the Labour Party), their road is wide open. Workers Power's capitulation will be slower and more contradictory than the run-of-the-mill pseudo-Trotskyists, but no less certain and no more revolutionary for all that. Our hope is that comrades inside WP who take its subjective revolutionary urges seriously will break in time from their centrist theory which still vacillates between revolutionary desires and reformist practices.

For a New Militant Leadership

Even leaving WP's particular views aside, there is another consideration that seems to call for joining Labour: the number of revolutionaries is tiny compared to that of the reformists, so a simple counterposition of a small group to mass reformist "unity"

appears to pit weakness against power. The problem is real, but the Labour Party answer is wrong.

At the level of the NUM, many militant strikers now see through the left leaders. Trotskyists must find ways to show them the way forward beyond simply countering reformist numbers with Marxist ideas. Given our distance from the situation our tactical offerings can only be tentative; would-be revolutionaries in the struggle must propose their own. From our perspective we would call for a new militant leadership of the union, dedicated to the fight for a general strike, to replace the current vacillators. It is not enough to urge the "rank and file" to force the leaders to fight on, since Scargill has no strategy that can win. Continuing in this way adds to the workers' frustration. We propose a different road.

Within our call for a new militant leadership (a united front proposal in the same sense as the labor party slogan for the United States when it is applicable), we would explain our view that such a leadership should be revolutionary -- the only kind that will fight capitalism's onslaught consistently. We hope to join in the fight for new leadership with the best militants, including those who do not yet see that revolution is possible, and prove to them in the course of struggle that it is.

At the political party level we have a similar approach but with important qualifications. Many militant workers do have illusions in the Labour left and its "support" for the miners, as opposed to the Kinnocks. We do not call for Labour to power at this point, since the reformist party is engaged in an atrocious act of betrayal. We also warn that Benn is betraying too and that, in the time-honored tradition of Labour lefts, he will not fight Kinnock. (This includes the Bennite pseudo-Trotskyists.) But since we do see that the fight of the miners against capitulation is reflected inside the Labour Party, we also have a united front orientation there -- not, however, the same as WP's.

The Labour Party is lock, stock and barrel a petty-bourgeois party which unfortunately retains its working-class base. The question for us (certainly not for WP!) is how the working class can use its mass struggle to break Labour's grip on its base. We therefore challenge the leftists and far-leftists inside Labour, who think that their party is redeemable, to choose between the working class and the party. We challenge them not only to fight for a general strike along with those miners and other militant unionists who are doing so. We also ask them to fight to make the Transitional Program the program of the Labour Party instead of its present reformist program or the left-nationalist Bennite equivalent.

We appeal to the left Labour groupings because many of their adherents are workers who believe a fight should be made for victory. We unite with them in the sense that we fight for the same transitional and general strike demands in the unions and among workers outside of Labour. The struggle will prove

which of us is right: whether the Labour Party is redeemable for socialism or, as we predict, it must be smashed as an obstacle in the proletariat's path.

Their leaders among the Bennites and the far-left cheerleaders will capitulate in the course of such a struggle (if they ever begin it). We believe that the militants will have to join in building a revolutionary communist party in order to win. The leftists and far-leftists are welcome to try to prove wrong our contention that such a new party is required. But at least the pseudo-Trotskyists ought to join in the demand that Labour adopt the Transitional Program: that, after all, was a major tactic that Trotsky developed that program for.

Through this tactic we can appeal to a large number of workers not simply to join a handful of revolutionaries but to build a mass party as an alternative to reformism. Our open revolutionary advocacy coupled with our tactical usage of united front demands stands in sharp contrast to the centrist fudge propagated by Workers Power, the leftmost of the pseudo-Trotskyists. Reformists say that the final goal is nothing; centrists affirm the goals but only as a promissory note for raising them in the far-off future. Communists now and in the future disdain to hide our revolutionary aims. Everything we do is designed to make them perfectly clear.

To sum up Workers Power's stance toward reformism, we note that its theory is as manipulative as its practice. Centrist theory is naturally ambivalent since it utilizes revolutionary concepts to cover for reformist conclusions. WP has tried to crystallize such ambiguity into a permanent method.

In our previous polemic against Workers Power, we referred to Trotsky's position that the USSR could only exist for a historical moment in the contradictory form of the counterrevolutionary workers' state which it had become. We noted WP's contrary view that the contradiction could survive for over half a century and would be resolved only in the bye and bye. On this basis WP finds it possible to be very critical of Stalinism while still maintaining a perennial defensist position toward it -- and thus essentially apologizing for it.

Not by accident, WP employs the same technique in its left-sounding apologia for social-democratic reformism. That is, it insists that the counterposition between revolution and reform will indeed occur -- but always safely in the future. Once again, this gives WP the luxury of radical criticism -- but when the chips are down, WP defends reformism. The upshot is that Workers Power gives socialism-via-parliament a new theoretical crutch in the form of socialism-via-postponement. It is not a revolutionary contribution to Marxist science.

Footnotes

1. "Planning and Value in the Soviet Union," Socialist Voice 20, "The Theory of Permanent Counter-revolution," Proletarian Revolution 21; Workers

- Power and the Irish Workers Group, The Degenerated Revolution: the Origins and Nature of the Stalinist States, London 1982.
2. In issue No. 1, Summer 1983, of Permanent Revolution, theoretical journal of the Workers Power Group.
3. Luxemburg, Reform or Revolution, author's introduction.
4. Trotsky, "A Forecast of the Future," in Leon Trotsky on Britain, page 138.
5. Trotsky, "Problems of the British Labor Movement," *ibid.*, page 154.
6. Trotsky, The Spanish Revolution 1931-39, pages 355-6.
7. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.5, page 384, cited on page 49 of the theses. The German words mean roughly "union-only-ism."
8. See our article "For a General Strike in Britain," Socialist Voice 9, which analyzes the rank and file of both the SWP and Workers Power.
9. Trotsky, Stalin, page 58.
10. Lenin, "The Lessons of the Revolution," Collected Works, Vol.16, page 302.
11. Lenin, "The Reorganization of the Party," *ibid.*, Vol.10, page 32.
12. Cliff, Lenin, Vol.1, page 176.
13. See "Self-Determination for Ireland," Socialist Voice 14, page 4, and "Letter to the IWG," Socialist Voice 19, page 3.
14. Trotsky, The Third International after Lenin, page 129.
15. Workers Power, Summer 1978.
16. "Resolution on the General Strike in Britain," Leon Trotsky on Britain, page 255.
17. See our 1979 letter to Workers Power, "For a General Strike in Britain," Socialist Voice 9, page 26.
18. See "The Labor Party in the United States," Socialist Voice 6, page 23.
19. "Letter from Prinkipo, May 19, 1932," in Leon Trotsky on the Labor Party in the United States, page 7; emphasis added.
20. *ibid.*, pages 8-9.
21. Discussion with Trotsky, March 21, 1938, in The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution, page 82; also in Leon Trotsky on the Labor Party in the United States, page 14.
22. The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution, page 173.
23. *ibid.*, page 115.
24. *ibid.*, page 87, emphasis added.
25. Socialist Voice 8, pages 16-32. The proper use of the workers' government tactic is summarized on page 22.
26. Workers Power, April 19, 1984.
27. Workers Power, November 28, 1984; editorial.
28. Workers Power, January 16, 1985; editorial.
29. See our polemic in "Miners' Strike Rocks Britain," Proletarian Revolution 22, pages 7-8.
30. Workers Power, January 16, 1985. ■

The Real Workers' Vanguard

We have often made sharp political criticisms of the Polish Solidarnosc leaders, both during the explosive class struggles of 1980-1981 and after the Stalinist regime's military suppression of the workers. Their faith in both the Catholic church and the "democratic" Western powers helped weaken many struggles. In fact, the very creation of Solidarnosc was a setback for the workers, a conscious retreat by the leadership from the Inter-factory Strike Committees, the dual power organizations that led the August 1980 strikes.

Nevertheless, Solidarnosc does have to reflect the workers' needs to some degree. So we are pleased to give credit where credit is due and print two statements (taken from the British left press) by underground Solidarnosc officials on the bitter, year-long British coal miners strike. In our view these resolutions are of great importance, both for the international working class solidarity that they demonstrate and for the views they express on the Polish state and economy.

The first is a scientifically accurate appraisal by underground Solidarnosc in the Masowsze (Warsaw) region, issued on June 26:

For four months the British miners have been on strike against a program of mass closures of mines for economic reasons. The miners are threatened with unemployment. The government has rejected compromise solutions and has resorted to severe police measures against the strikers. Thousands of miners have been arrested; hundreds have been hospitalized and one has been killed.

The government of the Polish People's Republic, despite hypocritical condemnation of the activities of the British police in the columns of the regime press and by the regime's pseudo-trade unionists, is profiting from the export of coal to Britain. It sells dirt cheap coal which has been mined in scandalously neglected working conditions and with reckless exploitation of the labor force and the coal field. The slave labor of the Polish miner serves to break the resistance of the British miner.

British miners! The true sentiments of Polish trade unionists towards the authorities of the Polish People's Republic and their practices was shown in the recent electoral farce which was boycotted by the workers [on June 17; Solidarity claimed that the voter turnout in Warsaw was only 57%]. In the prevailing conditions of terror, the Polish workers' movement is at present not in a position to undertake protest actions. But you may be certain that as you have supported and are supporting our struggle, so we are in solidarity with you. We strongly oppose every case where force is used against workers struggling for

their rights and interests.

Long Live Trade Union Solidarity!

The second statement comes from Upper Silesia, Poland's chief coal mining region; it was broadcast over the underground radio on June 17. This resolution shows signs of greater illusions in the Polish regime, but its solidarity with the British workers is no less strong.

The Underground Provisional Coordinating Committee of Solidarnosc miners vigorously protests against the present policy of the Polish People's Republic on the management of our major source of wealth -- coal. Selling it on foreign markets at competitive prices (i.e., at less than



Arthur Scargill, head of British miners' union, leaving Soviet embassy. Scargill could not persuade Russian and Polish "workers' states" to stop scabbing on strikers.

world market prices) is first of all a violation of the Jastrzebie Agreements (August 1980) [between the Polish government and Solidarnosc in Silesia], in which it was clearly established that coal is a national resource which must be used rationally. The above-mentioned pricing policy transforms investment in the mines into a straight economic loss.

Secondly, the Polish government's policy blatantly contradicts official propaganda which declares respect for the miners' dignity and endeavor. Thirdly, coal distribution and trade is organized outside of any social control. The Polish government has no right to behave like a mine owner and dispose of the national wealth as it pleases. Only the damned capitalists and dictators act in this way. Fourthly, the Polish government's policy in this field affects the basic interests of brother miners from other countries who lose their jobs as a result of it.

We hope the Party authorities and parliament -- who say they represent the people -- explain

what is really going on.

To the striking miners of Great Britain: the Underground Provisional Coordinating Committee of Solidarnosc miners sends you fraternal greetings and our support and solidarity for your struggle for the right to work. We know from our own experience what it means to lose a job. For this reason we will do everything possible to support your struggle, including in action. The protest we have sent to the Polish government and parliament is an initial measure taken in support of your struggle.

In contrast to these statements, readers of the Spartacist League press may have seen several references to the alleged betrayal by Polish Solidarnosc of the British miners' strike. The most recent was an article in the December 7 Workers Vanguard, reporting on a talk by a visiting British Spartacist: "So Solidarnosc came out in its true colors and sent a message of solidarity to the scabs." He also claimed that "the Russian government has actually supported the miners' strike in a number of fairly minimal ways, but the impact has been really impressive ..."

In the case of Solidarnosc, this slander flies in the face of the solidarity statements printed here. Moreover, on top of this lie the article chooses not to mention the real job of scabbing being done by the Russian and Polish governments (whose crackdown against the workers three years ago was warmly supported by the supposedly Trotskyist Spartacists). Moscow and Warsaw have been shipping oil and coal to Britain throughout the strike; Poland's coal exports have more than doubled since the start! In this the "workers' states" joined the equally anti-working class South African and American bosses (as well as the "socialist" Mitterrand government of France) in shipping coal to Britain to back Prime Minister Thatcher's efforts to crush the miners. And as the real Solidarnosc statements make clear, this policy is firmly opposed by the Polish unionists.

The evidence for the Spartacists' lie consists of two quotations from Lech Walesa published in the British bourgeois press. One comes from the July 29 Sunday Mirror. Walesa had words of praise for Thatcher — "With such a wise and brave woman, Britain will find a solution to the strike" -- and pro-capitalist advice for the miners -- "I disagree with any violence. The workers should demand the maximum, but not at the expense of bankrupting the employer." (Both quotes cited in Workers Vanguard, August 31.)

His second statement came from the October 9 Daily Mail (cited in the October 26 Workers Vanguard). It quoted a message by Walesa to the "National Working Miners Committee" of scabbing miners opposed to their union's militant leadership: "I am very sympathetic to your movement. My greetings to the British miners who are fighting for democracy in their union."

If these quotations are accurate they are a devastating indictment — of Walesa, not Solidarnosc as

a whole. They are not news to Marxists who have followed Walesa's career. After all, when he was leading the live Solidarnosc movement in 1980-81, he undermined and betrayed more than one strike. He charted a reformist course, always urging the workers to pressure but not overthrow the oppressive stratified capitalist regime. Likewise, Walesa endorsed Reagan and other Western mouthpieces for freedom of exploitation.

But since December 1981 Solidarnosc has been illegal and underground, and Walesa is not the leader of the struggles taking place. The clandestine leaders have taken quite a different stand towards the British miners, as their resolutions demonstrate.

Walesa in fact has continued his capitulatory policy of urging calm and collaboration on both workers and government whenever possible, following the line taken by the Polish church hierarchy under Cardinal Glemp. His current statements illustrate not only his prostration before Western capitalists but also his embrace of Polish state greed at the expense of the British miners' strike.

Walesa has been publicly criticized by other Solidarnosc leaders. Andrzej Gwiazda, the former vice-president of the mass organization, denounced "the appeals to passivity and moderation" launched by "certain moral authorities" including "the Nobel peace prize winner." This appeared in the underground journal of the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, where the workers created the historic Inter-factory Strike Committee in 1980. (La Stampa [Turin], December 18, 1984)

What do the Spartacists have to say about the underground statements of support? In the U.S., nothing. The American press has given little coverage to anything having to do with the British miners' strike, crucial though it is, so the U.S. Spartacist liars are under little pressure to compare Walesa's views with the workers'. But in Britain the Spartacists have to say something. So they sneer at the "paper support statements for the miners from various Solidarity branches" (Workers Hammer, November 1984)

How contemptible. It takes more than a little gall for these closet Stalinists who cheered the suppression of the Polish workers to mock the workers for being unable at the moment to do more than speak out for international solidarity. If the Polish workers did take action such as striking the ships carrying scab Polish coal to Britain, the Spartacists would be the first to applaud the government forces lined up against them. They are already doing a classical Stalinist job of whitewashing the scabbing Soviet government with praise for "actual support." Let all leftist workers clearly understand: the Spartacists' first loyalty is to our class enemy.

We hail the Polish workers and their struggle. Their internationalist solidarity in the face of hypocrisy and repression represents the proletariat at its best. It has nothing in common with the lies and sneers of the Spartacist worms. ■

Reagan

continued from page 1

es of prosperity, both Reagan and Mondale planned the same austerity for the masses that Jimmy Carter began in 1979. As well, both promised to continue U.S. efforts to buttress its faltering imperialist hegemony through military expansion. In the end, many workers voted for Reagan even though unemployment was high; given the profit boomlet he engineered for the rich, they swallowed the "prosperity and peace through militarism" line. They also voted to keep out of office the Democrat whose tax program and past record they feared would undermine their hopes.

Two key matters of interest for the working class were 1) the labor bureaucracy's big effort on behalf of Mondale, and 2) Jesse Jackson's competing campaign, supported by millions of blacks and a good part of the "socialist" left. The enormous push by the labor and black misleaders and their political bedfellows to strengthen working-class ties to the capitalist Democrats was a completely reactionary strategy. Whatever gains workers and blacks have made in the past have been won not via electoral dispensation but through mass struggles -- and this strategy was consciously designed to prevent any.

In some ways the Reagan campaign appeared more moderate than in 1980. The "far-out" anti-Wall Street demagoguery that frightened the big bourgeoisie then had proved harmless during Reagan's first term. For this reason the petty-bourgeois far-right turned cooler and flavored the campaign less than in 1980. But even this slight "moderation" was only relative, for the whole spectrum of U.S. politics has shifted notably to the right.

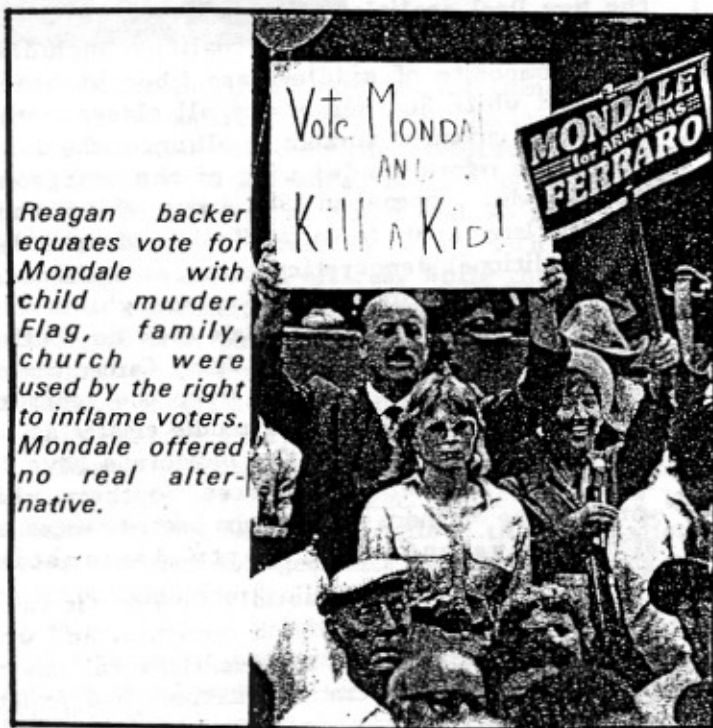
Mondale spouted some hot air about standing for the oppressed and chose a woman as his vice presidential nominee; such moves were designed to secure the party's left flank while conceding nothing to it. The real basis of his campaign was conservative: he appealed to "traditional" values, refused to fight for important social programs and attempted to prove he could be as tough with the Russians as Reagan. Mondale's main maneuver against Reagan was his "honesty" in calling for higher taxes, an anti-working class move that backfired in his face. In the final analysis, the Democrats' right turn was made possible by the labor and black misleaders; their lickspittle support allowed Mondale to swing to the right and defer to the prevailing ruling-class sentiment. With them in his pocket Mondale's famous "waffling" between left and right during the primaries turned into a one-way shift.

The New Reagan Attack

Despite the lack of any electoral choice for working people, the scope and character of Reagan's victory represent an ominous setback. This time

around the right-wing character of Reagan's anti-abortion ideology and blather about family values was made real by his administration's actual practices. The repeat run of jingoism and thinly-disguised racism was now backed by the very real conquest of Grenada and a threatened invasion of Nicaragua. As well, Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority were registering white voters on a more openly anti-black basis than in the past, to counter Jackson's effort to register blacks; this was instrumental in the victories of such notorious racists as North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms.

Given these circumstances, it is no surprise that Reagan has renewed his attack on the masses. After his re-election he immediately cashed in on his popularity with "middle America" to sock-it-to-them. He demanded new budget cuts to reduce the ever-growing federal deficit without trimming war spending. They include slashes in services to major sections of the working class and petty bourgeoisie (jointly disguised as the "middle class" in government



Reagan backer equates vote for Mondale with child murder. Flag, family, church were used by the right to inflame voters. Mondale offered no real alternative.

pronouncements) as well as the poor: notably cutbacks of mass transit aid, farm subsidies, old age assistance and small business loans. If he can duck the direct blame Reagan will cut social security too.

Singled out for attack are federal workers: their cost of living increases will be denied and pay will be cut. Reagan's policies have already had an obvious impact. Although postal workers were excluded from federal cutbacks, the recent postal arbitration lowered wages for new hires -- another step towards housebreaking (if not yet really breaking) the government unions.

We have continually pointed out that capitalism in crisis cannot sustain itself simply by draining the poorer layers of the working class. The attack

had to be escalated to reach broader sections, especially among workers and small farmers but reaching up to vulnerable small capitalists as well. Of course, despite official pronouncements about no more cuts to the federal "safety net," the poor are included too.

The Reagan administration is treading warily on its new front, a political hornet's nest. It has seized the moment of its electoral victory and high popularity. It will face opposition from both parties in Congress and knows that it won't get all it wants. Predictably, the union and minority leaders will yell and scream -- but given their overriding acceptance of capitalism and, above all, their fear of mass action, they will demand little: only less of the same cutbacks. Until there is a mass eruption to force real action, any protest demonstrations will be only demonstrative. The electoral strategy that the mass betrayers still rely on will get the masses nowhere.

Reagan's "Realignment"

The elections reflect the continued unraveling of the New Deal coalition that delivered Democratic majorities for decades. This coalition included a loose composite of middle-class liberals, blacks, Jews and white Southerners of all classes, ethnic whites and unionized workers -- all under the domination of the reform-minded wing of the bourgeoisie. But look what happened in 1984. Among white ethnics the only large group to go for Mondale was the Jews; such traditional democratic voters as Italians and Irish went heavily for Reagan. Southern whites voted overwhelmingly for Reagan; Mondale took no southern states (and even the Southerner Jimmy Carter was only able to win Georgia in 1980). Over the years the moderate urban bourgeoisie and middle classes as well as the "Dixiecrat" wing of the Democrats have left for greener Republican pastures. Southern white workers, like Northern workers who backed Reagan, are still ambivalent about party designation.

Blacks voted the most solidly Democratic (about 90 percent) of the old coalition elements. And while they turned out in record numbers, the total was not nearly as high as Democratic politicians had expected. And despite the most extensive labor support ever for any candidate, Mondale won only 53 percent of the votes of unionized workers. Considering that many white workers would have voted Democratic in any case and that most black unionists had ample reasons to oppose Reagan whatever the bureaucrats thought, official labor influence was even more pathetic than it first appears.

But if the old coalition has broken down, what has taken its place? "Realignment" is a popular word these days, signifying a basic electoral shift to the Republicans. It suggests not just a Republican victory in one election but a shift of a stable, predictable bloc of voters over a period long enough to mean electoral dominance. For example, Republican leader Paul Laxalt gloated, "We're on the threshold of a

golden era in Republican politics. We've got Ronald Reagan and the economy, plus a solid Sun Belt base while the traditional coalitions in the Northeast are crumbling" (*New York Times*, February 4).

Such a realignment, however, has not taken place. The Republicans do not control the House of Representatives, they actually lost two seats in the Senate and they hold the smallest minority of state governorships for any party in the White House in U.S. history. In addition, many people voted for Reagan "the man" rather than either for his party or even out of specific agreement on issues like abortion, nuclear weapons and the slash-and-burn budget. The real question is whether realignment is the direction of coming events.

The question must be considered historically. The New Deal coalition, which ended years of Republican rule in the 1930s, was forged by containing the mass struggles of the 1930s and incorporating layers of the working class through the post-World War II prosperity. The Democrats have lived off this capital for decades. The masses' misleaders convinced them that it was Franklin Roosevelt and his successors who gave them unions, decent living standards and civil rights, and saved them from the Depression. This myth survived through the post-war prosperity boom.

Behind "Prosperity"

In contrast, the current turn to Reagan can have no such long-term character because there is no possibility of a renewed long-term prosperity; the world is no longer the private preserve of U.S. capital. The Reagan boomlet has lasted only a couple of years, enough time to give him the election -- but that's about it. Mass cutbacks in social programs that he and the Congress adopted in 1981 deeply angered minority and many white workers. By 1982 the country had plunged into deep recession, contrary to Reagan's rosy predictions. Public sentiment and even much of the ruling class had grown disenchanted with Reagan.

Only the economic recovery of the past two years saved Reagan's neck. It provided the material basis for Reagan's bombastic, rose-tinted assertion that America has fundamentally snapped back from economic and social downturn and is on its way to a bigger and better future.

A sharper look at the social and economic picture reveals a situation that is considerably different. The recovery has been shallow, pumped up by some increased consumer spending and by highly volatile speculative capital from abroad, attracted by high short-term interest rates. It has not improved the critical areas of industrial productivity. (Business investment as a percentage of gross national product averaged two-tenths of one percent annually in the first Reagan term as compared to 5.4 percent under Carter. Over the whole term, industrial investment was up 3.5 percent, against 28.6 percent for Carter.) Thus the fundamental causes of the economic crisis underlying the boomlet have not been touched. The

most glaring evidence of the economy's weaknesses -- the budget and balance of trade deficits -- continue to climb to record levels. (The trade deficit, less publicized than the budget gap, was \$130 billion in 1984, up from \$25 billion in 1980.) The fictitious-capital basis of the American boom is transparent.

Viewed historically the comparison is even bleaker. The post-war boom brought substantial gains, at least in the imperialist world, and made mass changes in American society. Workers' wages did increase as a result of major strikes, some to middle-class levels. Many people rose out of the proletariat altogether. Racial minorities were able to win some substantive social gains through mass struggles.

But the boom masked underlying trends towards social polarization and intensified exploitation. Now high-pay manufacturing jobs have been replaced by low-pay service jobs. And "high-tech" job automation is leading to worker displacement with no corresponding job creation in newer industries.

The threat to the working class has become more apparent in the past fifteen years. For example, a study by the conservative Tax Foundation showed that real take-home income today is \$801 less than 10 years ago. The poverty rate reached its lowest levels years ago and has since been rising, along with unemployment. These trends accelerated during the Reagan years, because of both Reaganite policies and the collapse of the post-war boom. The median income is now \$107 less than in 1980. The poverty rate climbed from 13% in 1980 to 15.2% in 1983. The bottom fifth of the population has lost 7.6% in family income, while the top fifth has gained 8.7%.

The American dream of a permanent well-off middle class, composed of various petty-bourgeois layers and the upper end of the working class, is an illusion based on the post-war boom. The boom is long over, and now various studies suggest that this buffer between the major class poles and projected foundation for a Republican realignment is decomposing. At best it held its own under Reagan. Like society as a whole, the middle classes are polarizing, the top getting richer and the bottom being driven down.

Bonaparte of the Pigs?

Reagan won his landslide because there was just enough prosperity to make his act believable enough to allow people to cover their fears with hope. Large sections of the bourgeoisie think they have fared better than ever before. Reagan's doctrine of freedom for enterprise, low taxes, deregulation, military extravagance and in general bending over backwards to aid profits seems a fantastic blessing. Their continual fretting about the deficit is symptomatic of deeper fears about the economy as well as a maneuver to freeze out the masses. But in the time-honored manner of the capitalist class, such fears are no barrier to them gorging at the public trough as if there were no tomorrow.

The Reagan refrain had a somewhat different mean-

ing for his more plebeian supporters in the petty bourgeoisie and worker aristocracy. These saw government aid to the poor and affirmative action for minorities -- however feeble -- as a drain on their earnings, preventing them from moving up to the banquet table. For them "free enterprise" does not mean guaranteed military profits (and they don't like the



Democratic candidate Mondale with AFL-CIO chieftain Kirkland. Bureaucrats pinned this donkey on labor's tail.

rich who get them), but they want the chance to get a piece of the apparent prosperity. Deregulation and cutbacks meant for them the restoration of "fair" ways for them to get ahead at the poor's expense.

Therefore it was no fluke that so many voters selected Reagan for president along with Democrats for Congress and local offices. While they believed his song and dance, they retained old memories that the Republican party has always been the tool of wealth. Their Democratic votes were a hedging bet to preserve social security and the welfare state legislation that benefited them.

These divisions are reflected in the Republican disagreements over the budget. "Moderates" led by Senator Majority Leader Dole believe that capitalism needs even more stringent cuts to balance the budget; whereas right-wing "radicals" like Congressman Kemp appeal to their petty-bourgeois base by fantasizing that a permanent prosperity of profits is possible and can be accomplished without taking the "middle class" to the cleaners. When the boomlet collapses these divisions will grow more inflamed, and the Republican party will be torn between traditional openly bourgeois conservatism and the demagogic radical right. Neither wing is fascist today, but the schism does point to such a development in the future.

Ronald Reagan won his popularity by seeming to stand above the petty and wavering politicians of both parties. People want to have confidence in him because they see no alternative. He is not a true Bonaparte playing off the contending classes against one another; he is too conservative and the ground is not yet prepared. He is only a pale image of a future Bonapartist trend in American politics, straddling the Republican split through his reactionary "social" program for the plebeians and his enormous subsidy for the big bourgeoisie. He holds the party together

by keeping one foot in each camp. He dispenses swill to the bourgeois swine but only promises future sops to the masses. But as the crisis deepens his disintegration becomes inevitable.

The "New Patriotism"

There are additional reasons why the Republicans will not remain the dominant party over time. One basis of Reagan's success has been his blatant appeal to chauvinism, the "new patriotism," successor to the "Vietnam syndrome" of public unwillingness to die for imperialism overseas. The bourgeoisie has always used patriotism to bind the masses to its state apparatus; only an enemy threat serves to justify material sacrifice and austerity. As well, patriotism is what glues the Reagan coalition together. Reagan's mass base and the Republican party depend on the image of a powerful nation that nobody can push around. The "little guy" sick of being pushed around by the "special interests" likes Reagan because he won't let anyone push "us" around.

The bourgeoisie does indeed have an enemy: the social revolution that has reared its head in country after country since World War II, accelerating since the end of the post-war boom. The rulers have a difficult time believing that the working masses are really capable of such social struggles. Nor could they win American workers by telling them that the enemy is starving working people or rebels fighting bloody dictators abroad. They therefore prefer to blame outside evil agitators like the USSR (a position echoed in perverse symmetry by some on the left). The new cold-warriorism began under Carter, but the Democrats' jingoism seems pale compared to Reagan's -- another reason to vote for Reagan if you wanted the U.S. to stand firm and make the Russians back down. Mondale's effort to out-tough Reagan only succeeded in scaring voters without reassuring them that he could enforce a favorable "peace."

Of course, the new patriotism also helps ensure the flow of military slops into the bourgeoisie's trough, a more digestible fodder than spending for public needs. But contrary to a common liberal and left delusion, arms spending is not just a backhanded policy for priming the economic pump ("military Keynesianism"); it is an iron necessity for any dominant capitalist power in this imperialist age.

Here again the social cement holding the Republican coalition together is weak. The truth is that the Russian superpower isn't much of a rival to U.S. imperialist interests. It is too weak and inward-looking economically, and (consequently) too conservative politically to convince people that it is the evil force behind every upheaval abroad. As well, the attempt through the military build-up to force the Russians to boost their military budget beyond endurable limits is proving uncomfortable in the U.S. too.

Hence the Reaganites now oscillate between extreme bellicosity and a new mode of sniffing around Russian diplomats for arms control agreements and

increased trade. As American rivalry with its economically stronger "allies" in Europe and Japan grows, the international line-up becomes less secure. Economic collapse will shake up whole alliances and set the stage for a new scenario.

The reactionary radicals will have to accelerate not only the patriotic jingoism but racism as well, in order to divide the masses and retain their grip on desperate white plebeians. They will also need this division to crush the unions when the time comes, a necessary measure for defending profits. But in the last analysis a combination between fascists and the big bourgeoisie (like the one that brought Hitler to power in Germany in 1933) will take place not within the Republican party but on new ground; "free enterprise" will have to be interred in favor of far more radical rhetoric.

This scenario is by no means inevitable or even most likely. Despite the betrayals by the workers' leaders and their Democratic friends, the class is still powerful and largely undefeated. For all the fear and concessions of today, the working class will inevitably fight; it always has done so. Nor does the coming Republican schism and the desertion from the party by many workers necessarily mean a Democratic revival; when the working class retrieves the sense of its own power that it had, for example, in the thirties, the question of what party it chooses will open up again. If the union bureaucrats, minority misleaders and their leftist camp-followers have their way, the struggle will be betrayed to the Democrats. If the traitors cannot contain the struggle at that level they will opt for a new reformist party. But the struggle itself will give an enormous impetus for the workers to build their own revolutionary party.

The nucleus of revolutionary and communist workers at this moment is far, far too small for the mass of workers to see a Marxist leadership as a real alternative to the Mondales and Reagans. But with mass action and a few class victories the prospects will open up as the workers learn their own strength. The task today is for revolutionaries to point out that reliance on the Democrats, the union bureaucrats or "rainbow" network spinners offers no hope. The way forward is to fight for the general strike to halt Reagan's attacks. Such mass actions will spell the beginning of the end of the Day of the Pigs. ■



South Africa

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there were 14 percent more strikes than in the whole of 1983, and unofficial estimates for the same period indicate that the 1982 record of 364,000 man-hours lost was already exceeded. The reason for the major strike wave of 1982 was the massive union organization drive in that year, which forced the government to grant recognition to black and multiracial (predominantly black) unions. The regime also had to tacitly accept illegal unions. All of this meant the organization of thousands of workers and a cost of millions of dollars in settlements.

The Miners' Struggle

The experience of the most important trade union, the National Union of Mineworkers, illustrates the current strike wave. The officially non-racial NUM accepts whites, blacks, "coloureds" (people of mixed ancestry, according to apartheid's racist classification scheme) and Indians, and organizes both coal and gold workers. It was the first predominantly black union to be officially recognized by the government. The miners have plenty of reason to fight. About one thousand lose their lives at work per year, an average of over three every day! Injury estimates are up to 17,000 a year.

Since its formation in 1982 the union has organized 70,000 miners out of a total of 480,000 up to last spring. According to NUM leader Cyril Ramaphosa, a young lawyer, "In 1983 we had only 4 percent of the workforce. This year we had 20 percent. Next year we will have an even stronger army to take on the bosses." Indeed, during the strikes in May by coal miners and in September by gold miners, the union spread swiftly to thousands of unorganized workers. Cyril Ramaphosa, however, proved a vacillating general.

In the September gold strike against both the government and the powerful Anglo-American Company, Ramaphosa tried to keep his union in lawful channels. He first delayed the strike for two months during negotiations. The strike began on September 17 and, despite all efforts exerted by the leadership to keep the strike legal, "... when the strike got under way, the imagery recalled earlier days of South African labor relations. The police were called in, shooting started, and in unrest that spread to 2 non-union mines, seven miners were killed." (*New York Times*, September 30) That figure was later adjusted to nine killed, with injuries in the hundreds.

Ramaphosa commented, "We kept telling our members that it was necessary to have a legal strike. ... That way the police were not going to move in and start shooting like they do when there's an illegal strike." The police who battled an estimated 8000 miners apparently overlooked the fine distinction. When the strike was finally settled after two weeks, with a wage gain close to management's original offer

of about 13 per cent, Ramaphosa said the settlement was "stained with blood." In a masterpiece of understatement he concluded, "Our experience during the recent wage dispute proves that cooperating with the state by following procedures laid down in its labor laws does not serve our purpose."

Mass Protests Spread

Incredible as it may seem when state-enforced apartheid dictates all relationships, the majority of the union leaderships, like the NUM's, do not believe that politics is their legitimate purpose. They feel their duty is to lead economic fights only. But the workers in struggle don't recognize the limits imposed by their leaders. In late summer there began a series of uprisings by students and others in the black working-class townships, leading to the general strike (or "stayaway") in early November.

On August 30 the residents of three townships in the Vaal region, an area surrounding Johannesburg and Pretoria which houses the majority of the mining and



Unionists marching on token anti-apartheid picket in Washington. Some South African black unions see the AFL-CIO as 'imperialist.'

steel mills, erupted in violence. (Unemployment rates in the region are estimated at 56 percent.) Starting in Sharpeville, well remembered for the 1960 massacre of blacks by the government, residents fought rent hikes which were intolerable, given the slave wages and the rising food prices. A student boycott against racist education was about 100,000 strong.

The protests turned violent on September 3, the first day of the new constitution giving token representation but no power to coloureds and Indians — and not even the token to blacks. The protests took the form of burning and lootings and soon swept to at least a dozen different townships. These uprisings were not random violence: note what was destroyed in the township of Lehoa: 6 black administrative board offices, a teacher training college, a block containing police quarters, 46 private shops, 3 liquor stores run by the government, 2 beer halls run by the government and 16 homes, mostly those of police and black council members. Also hit but not de-

stroyed were 2 bus depots, a post office and a black commissioner's office.

It was perfectly clear in Lehoa, Sharpeville and other townships that the chief targets of the masses were black collaborators with the apartheid regime. A white observer wrote in a letter to the Times that "Several black council members were brutally killed. Black businesses were looted and torched." One of the most spectacular incidents occurred in Sharpeville: when a black deputy mayor with three of his cohorts attempted to quell a black crowd outside his home with guns, he and his friends were hacked to pieces and their bodies burned on his doorstep.

The regime struck back in late October after nearly two months of rioting in the township of Sebokeng near Johannesburg. Some 7000 soldiers rolled in to fight pitched battles which killed 80 blacks. Nearly 120,000 people were interrogated and 350 eventually arrested. The army was trying to stamp out the "agitators" who began and organized these riots. Despite both witch-hunting techniques and police maneuvers to pose as the "people's friends," the Office of Internal Affairs admitted they found no agitators.

The cops' inability to control the crisis was underscored on November 5, when a ban on demonstrating, striking and school boycotting produced yet more demonstrations, strikes and boycotts. A group calling itself the Transvaal Stayaway Committee, composed of black unions, members of the banned African National Congress (ANC), and other political and student groups, called a 2-day strike for the entire Transvaal Region.

In Johannesburg itself an estimated two-thirds of the workforce stayed off the job. In plants just outside the city the strike was 100 percent effective. Even the conservative Association of Chambers of Commerce claimed that throughout the entire Johannesburg-Pretoria Transvaal region, 40 percent of all businesses were closed down. In all, an estimated half a million workers took part. Some 250,000 students boycotted classes. Ten blacks were killed. Roadblocks and burning cars and buildings were shown to the sheltered white populace on television.

Let no one believe that these riots got out of hand because of the inefficiency of the police. Observers agree that the police and army were more efficient than ever before. At the end of September, when the country-wide death rates were still under 60 (less than in the 1976 uprisings), Alan Cowley of the New York Times speculated that the low figure was due to the police tactic of using tear gas bombs, whips, rubber bullets and birdshot as well as an expert placing of barricades. When security forces have grown more efficient, have more effective weapons at their disposal and have refined tactics for handling crowds -- and yet cannot control the opposition -- there is a profound social crisis.

A few months after the strikes no official tally of the dead has been released. But a compilation of previous government figures shows 145 people killed

by the first week of November; unofficial estimates put the year's total over 200. While this seems low compared to the 575 killed in the Soweto uprising of 1976, Law and Order Minister Louis LeGrange observed that "The present riots were more serious because they involved adults."

The Black Leaderships

In all this social turmoil the black masses are confronted with two major leaderships for their struggle: the nationalists led by the African National Congress (dominated by the pseudo-Communist Party), and the trade unions led by types like Ramaphosa. The nationalists believe that the masses should support a "people's war," that is, a guerrilla war led by the ANC. Though there is much division in the ANC due to its extreme organizational sectarianism, this much is clear: it wants the workers to play a passively supportive role while the guerrillas lead a radical, middle-class (definitely not socialist) revolution.

The ANC's anti-working class attitude is clear from its support for the strategy of divestment by foreign investors in South Africa. Such a strategy is first of all illusory, a point recognized even by the ANC. David Ndaba, the ANC's assistant representative to the United Nations, stated at an anti-apartheid conference in New Haven in November that "divestment is a battle you can never lose," for once you get someone to divest there is always someone else. That is, capitalism will always invest where it is profitable to do so. Of course, if some imperialists do divest, this could weaken the South African workers by raising unemployment even higher. The revolutionary solution is not divestment but the expropriation of South African industry by the workers.

In addition to depending on the workers' passivity, the "people's war" strategy of the ANC is virtually unworkable under South African conditions. The virtual absence of a black peasantry rules out a guerrilla war like in China or Cuba. The lack of a secure base outside the country as a result of South Africa's deals with Mozambique, Zimbabwe and the semi-independent black states rules out an escape route for a guerrilla group. The ANC has therefore taken to urban terrorism: placing bombs in electric plants, nuclear facilities, etc. While these raids have been well organized and effective, they don't add up to liberation and the ANC knows it.

The ANC has the problem of tying the working class to the leadership of a small black petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. That it nonetheless clings to its present strategy shows its fear of the power of the black working class and its dedication to the continuation of capitalism, even if reformed and non-racist, in South Africa -- an impossible capitalist utopia. Unquestionably the solution to apartheid will require violence. The question is whether it will be revolutionary force wielded by the working class or elite-group terrorism.

The black labor leaders try to keep the unions

from directly linking themselves to political action. This allows them to conduct politics in the name of the workers while trying to keep the inherent drive of the mass strikes from going over into political combat. But the mass struggle will succeed only if the state that enforces apartheid oppression is destroyed. Neither the reformist political strategy of the ANC nor the reformist economic strategy of the unions can work. The system now in crisis can't even deliver what it once did to its 4.5 million whites; no new capitalist nation or reformed old one could possibly grant the reforms needed for the liberation of its 26 million exploited peoples of color.

The regime is well aware of the division between guerrilla nationalists and economistic unionists, and wants to maintain it. That is why police commissioner Coetzee warns of a Marxist takeover of the South African Council of Trade Unions (SACTU), one of the black

within the South African left. When U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy visited South Africa in January, he was welcomed by the United Democratic Front, a broad grouping of liberal black, Asian and coloured churches and political groups. The UDF is led by Nobelist Bishop Desmond Tutu, the first black Anglican bishop of Johannesburg; it has many of the same demands as the ANC, including divestment. Bishop Tutu has stated many times that he hopes to convince the whites to make reforms to prevent a revolution; he is a natural ally of the liberal imperialist Kennedy.

But throughout his visit Kennedy was picketed and denounced as an imperialist by supporters of AZAPO, the Azanian Peoples Organization (Azania is the name used by radical South African blacks instead of South Africa). AZAPO's politics are nationalist, but it calls for socialism and the rule of the working class. We do not have enough specific knowledge about

the politics of AZAPO to evaluate it precisely, but its clash with the liberal pro-imperialist and anti-worker UDF reflects the political ferment caused by the failure of liberal reforms and the success of the mass strikes.

To go forward, a genuine communist party aiming to lead the socialist revolution must arise. In nearby Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe, the nationalist revolutions have not only failed to end the imperialist corporations' domination, but they have also been forced into deals to police the ANC and other anti-apartheid and anti-imperialist fighters at South Africa's behest. The revolution must be internationalist and must expropriate industry, not seek peace with capitalist

industrialists who are the main gainers from apartheid.

South Africa plays an enormous economic and strategic role for world imperialism. Its very existence as capitalist depends on maintaining vastly unequal rates of exploitation and near-slavery conditions for its black workers. That is why the liberal wing of imperialism is so anxious to reform apartheid; not to achieve equality but to prevent it. The regime and its Reaganite supporters in the U.S. know that no form of capitalism can survive in South Africa if the floodgates are opened. Reform cannot work.

The South African working class has its hands on the levers of the mightiest industrial machine in Africa. If they can grasp and hold this lever, it will mean the almost immediate spread of socialist revolutions throughout the continent, as well as a weakened imperialist foe for the workers of America, Europe and the rest of the world. The South African class struggle is critical for the future of the world. ■



Apartheid regime launches terror attack on Crosslands squatter camp. Blacks resisted forced dislocation.

federations, when reports appeared of an alliance between SACTU and the ANC. Said Coetzee, "We are aware of intensive attempts by the alliance to resurrect SACTU internally and to gain general support among the black work force in the initial phase and then to create a general sprout of revolution."

Coetzee knows better than both groups of leaders that black workers involvement in politics means posing their power and leadership against the capitalist state. He would like trade unionists to stay economists and revolutionaries to remain petty-bourgeois nationalists. But the workers' struggle is pushing the unions in other directions. When they are forced as in the Transvaal to lead what amounts to a general strike, the question of power is on the agenda. Pressure from the masses has forced one of the best organized black federations, the Federation of South African Trade Unions, to urge a boycott of the elections in the coloured and Indian communities.

The rising class struggle is causing realignments

Racist Violence Explodes in New York

The hunting season is in full swing in New York City. Last September, eleven transit police beat Michael Stewart and choked him to death for writing graffiti on the subways. In October a white cop, Stephen Sullivan, murdered an elderly black woman, Eleanor Bumpurs, in her home with a shotgun. But the big headline grabber this winter was Bernhard Goetz, the so-called subway vigilante. In January the legal system sanctified his shooting of four black youths in a crowded train, in effect giving licenses to whites out to kill.

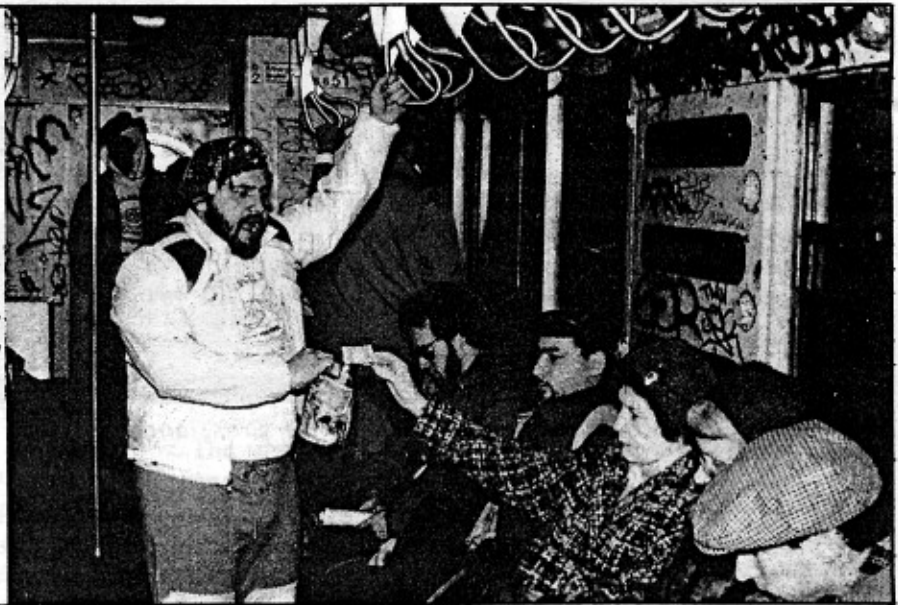
The three (!) cops charged with Stewart's murder got off when a judge ruled their indictment invalid because one juror tried to substantiate his suspicion that the prosecutors were covering up for the other killers. Only in February were they re-indicted by the grand jury. As for Sullivan, for his fine act he was declared a hero by Mayor Ed Koch and black Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward (even after a Bronx grand jury indicted him); later, after being considered for the honor of Grand Marshal at the St. Patrick's Day

had been attacked or seriously threatened. No wonder, since blacks are the chief victims of street crime and have good reason to support the right to self-defense. But circumstances turned out to be far different. By February it was clear that Goetz was a confirmed racist who clearly equates crime with minorities. "The only way we're going to clean up this street is to get rid of the spics and niggers," a neighbor quoted him as saying.

Nor did Goetz try to prove that he had been attacked. He argued that "I know what was in their minds ... the threats were numerous and subtle." His defense was that every white person feels threatened by four young black men on a subway train. And U.S. Senator D'Amato backed him up by making a public statement saying exactly that.

Because of the initial press reports it had seemed that the four victims were engaged in a mugging attack (they had previous arrest records, were carrying supposedly sharpened screwdrivers, etc.). Information revealed since Goetz's exoneration by the

Guardian Angels step in to fool people whom cops tread on. Here Angels collect funds for racist gunman Goetz. Mostly minority youth, they are used as unpaid cop auxiliaries. Workers need interracial armed defense guards, not fake angels.



parade, he was chosen to lead the police contingent.

Of all the recent killers and would-be killers, Goetz has won the loudest support, because the sensationalist media could drum up more of a seeming justification for his act. Much of the press, notably the lurid New York Post, portrayed him as a populist symbol of mass frustration over rampant crime. Even the stodgy upper-class New York Times joined in. Trendy neo-conservative Midge Decter wrote in the February 22 issue, "Now the Goetz case has made it evident beyond the power of anyone to deny that when it comes to the problem of street crime and what to do about it, there are no blacks and no whites -- there are only New Yorkers."

Indeed there was initial support among blacks as well as whites for Goetz, when it appeared that he

grand jury shows that he shot not in self-defense but with clear intention to kill. The four youths were guilty of obnoxious verbal hassling of passengers; the district attorney was unable to press charges against them because they committed no crime against Goetz or others.

At first Koch and other politicians had criticized Goetz for "taking the law into his own hands" (true enough, given that "the law" has been gunning down black people pretty regularly). Koch wasn't upset by the potential killing or the racism; his attitude in the Bumpurs case is proof. So is his complacent attitude in the scandal over Medical Examiner Gross's procedures in covering up evidence of police violence against Stewart, Bumpurs and other victims.

What disturbed the bourgeois spokesmen was that

Goetz usurped the police's monopoly on the use of armed force. While Koch now applauds Goetz after the media made him a hero, he fears the prospect of white and black working people being armed. Thus his first step following the subway shootings was to order a massive display of "proper" police power on the subways. Meanwhile commissioner Ward has stated that Goetz did not act in self-defense, clearly responding to the feeling of outrage among blacks as well as the sense among many sections of the bourgeoisie that the escalation of racial tension is unnecessary or at least premature.

Whether they praise Goetz or criticize him, the bourgeois spokesmen are trying to lead working people, including blacks, into the trap of supporting the capitalist police. However, the cops are an even greater danger, certainly no solution to the problem of crime. This was made abundantly clear in the case of hero cop Sullivan. Koch, the police and most of the media painted vivid pictures of Bumpurs armed with a knife, lunging at innocent cops. In fact, the 66-year-old grandmother was at home undressed when in barged six emergency service ("tactical") patrolmen, two housing authority cops, a city marshal and a deputy -- carrying guns, metal bars, protective helmets, bulletproof vests and plastic shields. If she did have a knife, she had good reason for self-defense. Ward and Gross lied that the police had fired only one shot. Later it came out that the first shot had blown off her hand; then the deliberate Sullivan fired a second blast to kill her.

Working-Class Defense Needed

Koch and the cops figured that the death of an elderly black portrayed as crazy would be quickly forgotten. They were wrong: blacks took to the streets in protest. That was the reason Bronx district attorney Meroia brought Sullivan's case to the grand jury. "How in God's world could I not bring up the Bumpurs case?" he said in a newspaper interview. "If I didn't bring it to the jury there would be ten thousand black citizens outside protesting."

These comments followed a police "riot" of nearly ten thousand armed cops, nearly all white, protesting the indictment and defending their right to murder, again with support, somewhat restrained, from Koch and Ward. The police "union" pointed to the black and Hispanic majority on the Bronx grand jury to claim that Sullivan was being victimized for only doing his job -- again true, since the cops' real job is to brutalize and terrorize in defense of capitalism.

Bumpurs was killed while cops were evicting her for a few hundred dollars in back rent. The police and media attack on blacks now is just a taste of future pogroms when the campaign to get white working people to see blacks as their enemy intensifies. Capitalism uses the cops not only to divide the working class but to conquer it as a whole. The assault on blacks is linked to the growing strike-breaking activity of the police, who bust white heads and black.

Crime of all sorts against workers is inevitable under capitalism. A start can be made against fighting it with workers' defense guards and a workers' militia, disciplined and organized by our class to defend itself.

Capitalism encourages legitimate anger over crime to build up its police powers and create a climate of race hatred. It is a disastrous mistake to believe crime or self-defense can be color-blind or class-blind. The Goetz case is a warning of what will come unless a working-class movement develops, offering an alternative answer to crime as part of its alternative to capitalism itself. ■

Famine

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dictators had shifted patrons from the U.S. to the USSR, the U.S. seized this "excuse" to first deny and then delay food aid when the Ethiopian regime warned of the current disaster. Now it is wielding its food to try to swing Ethiopia back into the Western camp. The political responsibility for the present famine is thus widely shared.

The fundamental reason for recurrent famines is capitalist economics, both the local (sometimes pre-capitalist) class structures and imperialist domination. Commercialization of agriculture for cash crops to be sold on the market has evicted food-producing peasants and wiped out grazing lands; in sub-Saharan Africa, food production per capita has fallen about 15 percent in ten years. World market prices for agricultural products, dominated by giant Western corporations, often drop catastrophically, while prices of inputs (fertilizer, machinery, etc.) tend to rise. Surpluses are siphoned off by local rulers and the imperialist powers who sustain them, including the United States. (Ethiopia, for example, has an \$800 million debt to Western banks and must repay \$90 million a year.)

As a result, poor countries have become dependent on the major food exporters, above all the United States, which brandishes its food production as a powerful political weapon. The U.S. Congress passed an emergency food aid bill last year which prompted the eminently bourgeois Economist magazine (April 14, 1984) to comment, "Priority will go to countries like Mali, where a once-socialist military regime [!] is pursuing free market economics under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund."

U.S. farmers, like "third world" countries, are heavily in debt to the banks. Their \$200 billion burden, together with low prices for food products, is the cause of the farm crisis. At one end of the world debt dictates farm overproduction; at the other it imposes shortages. Repudiation of the imperialist debt is the way to get producers at both ends back on their feet. At a time when the capitalist system most blatantly shows itself an abomination, it also points out a rapid route to its own abolition. ■

Nicaragua

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the imperialists means only their right to rule by fair means or foul. The workers' revolution that overthrew Somoza's prison regime in 1979, despite the Sandinista leadership that holds it tightly within capitalist bounds, remains an inspiration to the masses of Latin America and therefore a mortal danger to imperialist control. For all the Sandinistas' desperate search to conciliate, the fear of spreading social revolution is what draws Washington's hostility.

It is therefore critical for U.S. working people to defend the Nicaraguans' right of self-determination and to stand up against the war "our" government sponsors. But at the same time we are obliged to defend the interests of the working class inside and outside of Nicaragua against the pro-capitalist Sandinistas. That has been the policy of the League for the Revolutionary Party since the revolution.

The Sandinista policy of concessions to imperialism, designed to show how moderate and harmless they can be, continues to prove itself a dismal flop. For example, the Nicaraguans have pledged to repay all the foreign debts Somoza incurred to finance his bloody rule. Indeed, the Sandinistas have largely succeeded in paying these debts on time, far more so than any other Latin American country. They have persuaded or coerced workers and students to labor without pay on state and privately owned coffee and cotton plantations to raise hard currency; they have allowed real wages to decline precipitously -- all to pay off the imperialist debt and hope that credit won't be cut off. But the U.S. has cut it off anyway, not only its own government loans but, in November, those of international agencies as well. Under American pressure, European "socialist" governments like France and Spain are holding back their aid too.

The recent voting was another case in point. No elections were held in Nicaragua for five years after the revolution, and not because the Sandinistas feared losing. On the contrary, in the early years they would have won in all likelihood a greater percentage than the 67 percent they got last November. But elections might have undermined the Sandinistas' alliance with the openly capitalist figures represented in the ruling juntas and advisory Council of State far in excess of their popular support. Rather than showing gratitude for the Sandinistas' generosity, however, these pro-imperialist opportunists peeled off one by one, left the government, fled to Miami to count their take and joined up with the counterrevolutionaries.

The latest to go was the Honorable Arturo Cruz, not very long ago the Sandinistas' ambassador to the United States but most recently the official contra candidate for president. Cruz and his U.S. backers demanded that the Sandinistas negotiate with the

CIA's army of rapists and murderers to set conditions for the election in advance. When this humiliating proposal was rejected, Cruz backed out. But two right-wing opposition parties did run, getting hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign funds from the government, and time blocks on public and private radio and television -- which they used to denounce the Sandinistas as totalitarian (!) puppets of Cuba and Russia. For their efforts they got a big block of seats in the National Assembly.

Contrast this treatment with that accorded extreme opposition parties in this country. For example, the Socialist Workers Party tried to get on the ballot in New York state in 1984. It followed to the letter the onerous rules applying to minority parties and signed up twice as many petitioners as required; still the election commission declared their petitions invalid, and, as typically happens, all appeals were denied by the courts. The parties on the ballot in Nicaragua ranged far more widely in politics and were far more equally treated than ever happens here.

To no avail. On top of all the U.S.'s efforts to maneuver the Sandinistas' conservative opponents out of the elections, it escalated military harassment. As a Sandinista representative complained at a "town meeting" against American intervention held in New York on December 8: "At first the U.S. said that elections in 1985 were too late. Then, after the right wing wanted more time to organize, the U.S. said that 1985 was too early. We've tried everything we can. I don't know what else we can do."

There is in fact very little they can do to satisfy imperialism. As petty-bourgeois radicals ruling in Bonpartist fashion, the Sandinistas have to play a precarious balancing act between the workers and peasants on the one hand and the bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialist on the other. Because they rose to power on the backs of a workers' revolution, they cannot easily liquidate all the workers' gains; to do so would destroy the one counterweight they have to imperialist pressure. But to meet the full demands of the working class and peasantry would mean repudiating the imperialist debt, allowing the peasants to seize the plantations and estates and expropriating industry -- in short, ending the economic power of the bourgeoisie. And that too would leave the Sandinista act unbalanced; their days would be numbered as the workers learned that their class can rule for itself with peasant support.

The Sandinistas can do none of this. Typically they take one step toward the masses but two towards the bourgeoisie, as with the elections. Thus they restore the right to strike but deny strike benefits to the workers at La Victoria brewery, members of a Sandinista-led union. They selectively arm Sandinista-approved workers in the militia, but also halt what military aid they were permitting to reach the anti-imperialist rebels in El Salvador. They censor occasional articles on security grounds in the right-wing scandal sheet La Prensa, but have shut

down newspapers of working-class leftists.

This balancing act is hailed by middle-class U.S. leftists as proof of "pluralism," great wisdom and revolutionary shrewdness. In reality it is strangling the revolution. Preventing peasants from seizing the land they work allows the rightists and even the con-tras to masquerade as champions of the smallholders. The attack on strikes and the attempt to establish Sandinista trade-union domination through a federation of "productionist," that is, company, unions allows the CIA-backed labor groups to pose as the workers' friends. Agreeing not to help arm the Salvadoran rebels weakens a key front in the anti-imperialist struggle but of course gets nowhere in convincing the U.S. to stop arming its slaughterers.

The Sandinista capitulations will placate neither Nicaraguan capitalists nor American imperialists; they need the whole loaf, the smashing of proletarian and peasant self-activity. The "prolonged anti-people's war" waged against Nicaragua has had the initial effect of uniting the country. Over time, however, it will destroy the regime's popularity and perhaps the workers' movement as well.

The presidential election amounted to a plebiscite on Sandinista rule. Given the option of choosing between them and the friends of the CIA and the con-tras during a war, the result was a foregone conclu-

sion. The real surprise was that the Sandinista vote wasn't much larger; this bespeaks underlying discontent. (The 80 percent figure projected by some Sandinista spokesmen was never approached.) The right-wing baby monster that the Sandinistas saved from death after the revolution has grown to adulthood under imperialist feedings and Sandinista protection. As it becomes bolder it will strive to devour not only the workers and peasants but also the Sandinistas who hold the masses back.

The 5 percent vote achieved by the far-left parties has been generally mocked by enthusiasts of both Sandinistas and conservatives. Yet this was achieved despite the leftists' vacillating and often mimicking attitude towards the Sandinistas. It is a small indication of the need for a revolutionary alternative.

To kill the counterrevolution once and for all, to complete the task they began in 1979, the workers must shove the Sandinistas out of the way. "Pluralism" only provides fuel for the growth of fascism. A revived workers' revolution would expropriate the fifth-columnist bourgeoisie, inspire and spread revolution across Central America and make possible the only solution in the masses' favor: a socialist federation of the entire region. It would shake U.S. imperialism to the roots, a blessing for not only American workers but the entire world. ■

1199

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depends on management's claimed budget deficit, now figured at about \$45 million for the two-year period.

Meanwhile Turner & Co. persistently deny the existence of any givebacks and insist they've got a full contract. This flies in the face of widespread press reports detailing how "negotiations" between union and bosses over the exact magnitude of the givebacks are still incomplete. Anger has mounted as months pass without the raise and signs indicate that it won't be retroactive, despite Turner's promises. Most 1199ers now know they were sold out big.

The Loyal Opposition

The only element within the union likely to gain in the short run from the defeat is the "Unity and Progress" slate, which has been challenging Turner for control. U&P has a core of former bureaucrats and organizers who worked under ex-President Leon Davis, as well as delegates loyal to the Davis crowd. Their propaganda proudly claims loyalty to the Davis tradition, currently embodied in National Union President Henry Nicholas. U&P supported Nicholas in his power squabble with Turner, which resulted in the splitting of New York 1199 from the National Union.

Before the strike fiasco, U&P's talk about bringing back the glory days of honest trade union militancy drew little interest from workers, and especially

little from the black and lower-paid workers in the Hospital Division. They remembered the sellouts under Davis in the '70s, and while they didn't expect great gains with Turner either, they preferred to side with a black woman who at least reflected some of their experience. Turner thus came to power as an advocate of black leadership against white control.

In contrast, U&P has run on an integrationist line, opposing Turner as "divisive." From the beginning the bulk of its support came from the whiter, skilled sections of the union, the Guild and R.N. Divisions. Although they have also gained support from blacks, it too comes disproportionately from the Guild rather than the Hospital Division. But despite the demagogic and self-serving nature of Turner's campaign, her charges of racism against the Davis regime can't be dismissed. Davis' own self-defense, published in an interview in Unity and Progress News, shows his patronizing conception of the race issue:

"The whites in the Union built the Union. They brought the blacks into District 1199 and in doing this showed the way to the entire labor movement. They did this by organizing black workers, listening to the needs and the will of black membership and advancing black leadership.

"District 1199 was the least prejudiced union in the United States with no exceptions. ... Doris Turner was brought in by white leadership, as a commitment to black hospital workers to have leadership from their ranks with whom they could identify."

In fact, 1199's successful organizing drives in

the early '60s were a direct result of the pressure of the mass civil rights movement and the actions of black workers themselves, not just of a beneficent group of elite "progressives." Yet Davis was sincerely proud of representing "the least prejudiced union" and of hand-picking token blacks for slots in the bureaucracy. His typically liberal strategy was to groom black leaders who could head off a genuine explosion from the ranks. He never broke from the politics of the racist and reactionary AFL-CIO; he simply gave it a cleaner image.

Turner added a new trick to the old game with her particular version of "black leadership." It is no coincidence that she rose to power when real gains for hospital workers were declining. When trade unionism could no longer offer the hope of "making it" for the mass of black workers, the Turners provided a vicarious substitute. Turner's "anti-racist" struggle did not reach beyond the confines of the 1199 headquarters. For example, she never opposed Davis's parceling of 1199 into divisions, giving greater weight to the small craft divisions than the large Hospital Division, the militant heart of the union.

During the Strike

When the strike began, Turner was denounced by the bourgeois press as a flaming militant. The hospital bosses' refusal to negotiate with her was viewed by many workers as another racist attack on black leadership and by extension all blacks. There was more than an element of truth in this. But her leadership and strategy were nevertheless disastrous, and U&P provided no alternative even when many strikers decided to turn scab. The LRP, with far smaller forces, argued in picket lines, rallies and meetings for a no-scabs policy and a strategy aimed at initiating a general strike as a way out of the disaster. Of course, we also explained the need to stand with Turner, to the extent that she was under attack by the racist bosses and was forced to defend the union.

U&P's solution to the pressures of the struggle was to squelch any public criticism of Turner in the name of "unity." This was a thin excuse for their political inability to present an alternative strategy or program. It was also gross opportunism; by not fighting the popular misconception that loyalty to the strike meant loyalty to Turner, they helped to guarantee the sellout.

After the Strike

As soon as the strike was over, U&P filed papers with the Labor Department for an investigation into the elections in which Turner's slate had defeated them. But their big coup was the Dave White revelations. This long-time officer, who served under Turner after most of the old guard had left or been cut out, had signed an affidavit with the Labor Department describing the ballot fraud.

It is clear why the fraud happened. Without it, Turner would have won a majority in 1199 but would

have lost in the Guild and R.N. divisions; and 1199 bylaws require a majority vote in all four divisions. Turner would have then easily won a majority in the runoff vote, when all votes are counted together. But then she couldn't have claimed the kind of overwhelming and unquestioned support that Davis had enjoyed during his regime.

Few workers were shocked to hear that Turner messed with the votes. It is the common understanding of experienced 1199ers that Davis & Co. beefed up the count in past elections even when they were running unopposed; and when the leftist Progressive Labor Party ran a slate, the PLP faced attacks by Davis' goons even though they had no chance of beating him. Like all capitalist politicians, union bureaucrats will do whatever they can to retain power. So when union hack Dave White stated that his participation in the ballot fraud was "the first lie I've ever told the workers," only U&P people pretended to take this seriously. They hailed him at their January conference.

Aside from the ballot scandal, White's main criticism of Turner is that the strike was a waste of time. White's criticism on this point is superficial and mainly devoted to arguing that Turner didn't capitulate soon enough. He "thinks a deal for a wage increase with fewer concessions, and EOWO [every other weekend off, a key union demand] for all but a handful of workers, could have been made without the strike that cost seven weeks' pay and weakened the union." (Village Voice, January 15) White has also told the press that "you have to consider the times you're in. The days of big increases for hospital workers are gone; we are no longer the least paid service workers in the country; we are the highest paid." (National Alliance, January 25)

Although it has not officially endorsed White, U&P shares his view that the strike was "unnecessary." U&P dodges the question of givebacks, while White openly says he favored accepting concessions. They both opposed the fight for EOWO because over 80% of 1199ers already have every other weekend off or better; the members that don't have it, of course, are mainly in the Hospital Division. Their analysis of the strike exposes their stunning lack of any traditional trade union militancy. It is no coincidence that the lesson they draw from the strike is "don't struggle," the same lesson the bureaucracy always tells workers.

Anti-Turner Sentiment Grows

The growing desire within 1199 to oust Turner benefits U&P for the moment. More and more workers talk of voting for them in the next election. There was a large and outspoken vote in early February against constitutional changes proposed by Turner, in part organized by U&P. Turner still won, but she carried the Hospital Division by a smaller margin than in the past.

Many workers have by now learned that Turner is a class traitor. Yet consciousness is still tremendous-

ly mixed. There is a serious threat of a racist backlash; various comments are heard linking the fact that Turner can't seem to cut it to the fact of her being black. These comments come in different forms from white, Hispanic and even black workers. There is talk that blacks and Jews just can't get along, a reflection of the general breakdown of the black-liberal alliance. Some black workers feel that Turner's inability to negotiate a good contract shows that blacks just don't have the necessary clout to deal in white society.

U&P propaganda, constantly portraying Turner as the height of special incompetence and corruption, sure doesn't help. Neither does their friend Dave White: "Doris had a ghetto cunning that Davis didn't understand. She cut his throat the first chance she got" (*In These Times*, January 23). In fact, the whole trade union bureaucracy is rife with incompetence, corruption, cunning and throat-cutting. It is necessary to point out that the real problem is the wrong class politics which gives rise to these evils.

It will take considerable cynicism for most workers to vote for the group of bureaucrats hooked up with U&P. They also have a history of sellouts and anti-democratic policies. Eddie Kay, for example, a long-time Hospital Division vice-president in Queens, was known mainly as a goon responsible for derailing many local struggles throughout the years.

It is therefore understandable that Turner still retains a lot of firm support among black workers. The more she is attacked as an individual black leader, the more they feel the need to support her in defense of blacks in general. This sentiment was reflected in a recent editorial in the black bourgeois *Amsterdam News*, which pointed out that blacks like Dave White who now oppose her are simply fronting for white leaders. The reality is that Turner too is fronting for the same racist system.

1199 is polarized between pro-Turner forces and the anti-Turner U&P. If a (mythically) honest election were held today it would be close, although Turner would probably still win. The tragedy is that the victory of either side would be a disaster for hospital workers.

Workers currently being laid off at various hospitals don't believe anything can be done and consequently don't demand a fightback from either Turner or the U&P delegates. The layoffs clearly show how the strike defeat weakened the union. But the lack of resistance also indicates that those turning to U&P do not see it as a militant alternative. They do so out of disgust with Turner coupled with cynicism about their own ability to fight -- both sentiments largely caused by the strike defeat itself.

U&P's legalistic strategy is designed to keep the rank and file passive. Telling the workers that the capitalist courts and labor agencies will clean up the union not only spreads illusions. It also sabotages any defense of the union itself, which can only be damaged further by "help" from the bosses' state.

Turner's crime is that she seeks to reduce the black struggle to a question of one "ethnic" machine against another. Bureaucrats like Turner divide black, Hispanic and white workers from one another, not to champion the oppressed but to block class struggle altogether. U&P wants to return to Davis' integrationism, which always means white patronization and domination. In contrast to both, the solution will come not from 1199ers struggling in isolation but through a mass fight against the policies of the whole labor bureaucracy.

American history has shown that when racial division becomes the central outlook among workers, blacks inevitably lose out. The capitalists can then use many white workers to attack blacks and destroy class unity -- in order then to turn against the whole class. As well, it is no wonder that many black workers have little awareness of class power, for the unions refuse to unleash it. For example, the AFL-CIO does nothing about unemployment, which hits blacks far out of proportion to their numbers. When all workers are up against the wall, blacks get crushed.

Under these circumstances black workers cannot ignore their black identity and the need for forms of self-organization as a defense. But their decisive hopes must lie in working-class consciousness and class struggle. Because of their history and strategic position within the economy, blacks will play a role in the new workers' leadership far out of proportion to their numbers.

Narrow trade unionism can at best result only in gains for a shrinking layer of aristocratic workers and hopelessness for the rest. Fortunately there are also workers who see the need for an alternative. The LRP works to build a leadership to unite workers around an advanced consciousness of common class interests. We fight for a general strike to counter the labor bureaucracy's class collaboration. We argue for slogans like "jobs for all" and "free quality health care" which speak to the needs of all workers while bringing the needs of the oppressed to the fore.

The task of the working class is to recover its understanding of its tremendous strength and its counterposed interests to capitalism. Then it will fight the competing cabals of pro-capitalist labor leaders and create the revolutionary party it needs. ■

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PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Spring 1985

Nicaragua:

How the U.S. Defends Democracy

The Nicaraguan elections held last November 4 were meant to please the United States, but the attempt at accommodation fell on deaf ears. Confronted by more democracy than they demand of their own allies in Latin America, U.S. officials, private agencies and foreign auxiliaries have all escalated the military attack on Nicaragua and its revolution.

Immediately after Sandinista head Daniel Ortega was elected president, Washington sprouted with stories of invasion plans based on the false claim that Nicaragua was being armed with Soviet jet planes. Despite a paper Congressional ban on further U.S. aid to the "contras," former and current government officials are funneling arms and money to the guerrilla thugs who have killed 8000 Nicaraguans in three years. Further arms come via U.S. allies Israel, Honduras and El Salvador. And U.S. ships and planes maneuver openly in Nicaragua's skies and waters.

By late February the Reagan administration had switched from "covert" tactics to open avowals of its intention to bring down the Sandinista state. Reagan himself said that no solution was acceptable to the U.S. unless "they'd say 'uncle.'" And tragically, as we go to press the Sandinistas were continuing their policy of accommodation, making concessions in their military defense in a vain attempt to conciliate U.S. bourgeois opinion.

The official American justification for this belligerence is that Nicaraguan democracy is a fraud, nothing but a cover for Soviet-style fake elections and



Reagan likens contras to U.S. founding fathers. The real analogy is to traitor Benedict Arnold.

totalitarianism. Yet Nicaragua's regime is a hundred times more free than the Somoza dictatorship it replaced, not to speak of the despicable present-day "allies" the U.S. calls its friends. The U.S.'s hypocritical defense of democratic principles is meant to give it a free hand to wage an all-but-open undeclared war, circumvent all negotiations and even bourgeois legalities, in order to bring down a government installed through a genuine mass revolution.

The criminal charade proves that "democracy" for
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1199: From Sellout to Scandal

Six months after their strike, hailed as a "victory" by union president Doris Turner and much of the left, 50,000 hospital workers in New York 1199 are still working without the 5 percent raise they supposedly won. The conduct of the strike produced deep demoralization, and to top it off, a scandal exploded in January. Former executive vice-president Dave White went public with charges that Turner had rigged last April's union elections and misled the strike, manipulating and lying to the members throughout.

As noted in the detailed analysis in our previous issue, LRP supporters in the union were the only organized opposition to Turner's settlement. Even before the first reports of Turner's sellout surfaced, we had warned our fellow workers in speeches and leaflets that Turner's strategy was no different from

that of the other AFL-CIO bureaucrats; her approach could only mean massive concessions. By the end, the poorly prepared strike had been effectively sabotaged by the union leaders, and the balance of forces was greatly in the bosses' favor. Any contract signed under such circumstances was bound to contain major givebacks and materially set back any defense against union-busting as well.

Our unhappy prognosis has since been confirmed. The settlement has been released to the delegates, although never to the members at large. As a precondition for the raise, it obliges the union to select a huge amount of givebacks from a list of options, like freezes in benefit and pension funds -- including deferral of the raise itself. The amount of givebacks

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