



Re-Create
the Fourth International

Published by the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Has Labor Turned the Corner?



In a blazing headline in its August 31 issue, the Communist Party's *People's Daily World* proclaimed: "The Mood is 'No Retreat.'" In the article, CP head Gus Hall announced a decisive new "turning point in the class struggle." He cited "the militancy of the Virginia coal miners' strike, ... the strike by Eastern

pilots, machinists and flight attendants ... the strike by 200,000 phone workers nationwide, and ... the militant two- and three-day stoppages of the New York City hospital workers." Hall claims that "the grassroots solidarity movement is an expression of a higher level of class consciousness." *continued on page 16*

Race, Class and Politics in New York Hated Koch Ousted, 'Healer' Dinkins Wins

David Dinkins won the New York Democratic primary on September 12, making it highly likely that the largest city in the United States will have a black mayor. An end has finally come to the blatant anti-working

class and racist reign of Ed Koch.

Dinkins' triumph prompted a wave of celebrations. Union leaders who should know better have been heard to say that a new day for labor is dawning in New York. The leftist *Guardian* newspaper enthused that "New York City, where daily existence can be so repressive, suddenly *feels* like a better place to live."

"It's hard to remember a more palpable sense that an election will really make a difference. That optimism is not limited to New York's vast African-American communities ... where people were literally dancing in the streets ... Among New Yorkers of various backgrounds there is widespread hope that if he becomes the first Black mayor of this city where racial tensions have become razor sharp, Dinkins will live up to his campaign image as the 'Great Healer.'" *continued on page 11*

Inside

Imperialism's Real Dilemma	2
Bush's Drug War: Against Whom?	2
Poland: Solidarity Regime Threatens Workers	3
Soviet Strikes Shake Gorbachev	7
Hospital Contract No 'Technicolor Dream'	20
Iranian Leftists Killed	25
Defend Abortion Rights!	32
Decline of the Nicaraguan Revolution	32

East Bloc Breakdown Accelerates: pages 3-9

Imperialism's Real Dilemma

A headline in the *New York Times* (September 16):
**U.S. VOICING FEARS
THAT GORBACHEV
WILL DIVIDE WEST**

Bush's advisers are worried that Gorbachev's peace moves, born out of the desperate need to rescue the staggering Soviet economy, will weaken the cement binding together the Western bloc. The article explained, "The argument is that Mr. Gorbachev's loosening of the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe and the Baltic republics could bring about damaging instability in Europe and delude many Western nations into rushing to Moscow's assistance without regard to NATO's long-term interests."

The *Times* quoted Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger: "For all its risks and uncertainties, the cold war was characterized by a remarkably stable and predictable set of relations among the great powers. ... " But now we face "the danger that change in the East will prove too destabilizing to be sustained."

Let us be clear. Eagleburger was not expressing nostalgia for the cold war, as some critics suggested, but rather for international stability — as he plainly said. And he was not alone.

A "senior Western diplomat," according to the September 26 *Times*, criticized the president of Hungary's parliament for the "irresponsible" and "counterproductive" statement that his country desired neutrality between East and West. "At the moment, he said, the Soviet Union is showing considerable tolerance for Hungary's democratization." Why make waves?

To show that these officials were not spouting off on their own, Secretary of State James Baker chimed in
continued on page 24

Selected Articles in Back Issues

- No. 1: The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party
- No. 2: Capitalism in the Soviet Union
- No. 3: The Class Nature of the Communist Parties
- No. 6: The Labor Party in the United States
- No. 7: The Black Struggle: Which Road?
- No. 8: Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program
- No. 9: Marxism and Military Policy; Afghanistan
- No.10: Polish Workers Shake the World
- No.11: Iran: Revolution, War and Counterrevolution
- No.16: How Polish Solidarity was Defeated
- No.18: LRP Convention; Palestinians after Lebanon
- No.19: Black Upsurge, Electoral Trap; Marx and the Crisis
- No.20: Planning and Value in the Soviet Union
- No.21: Left & Democrats' Swamp; Nicaraguan Concessions
- No.24: Imperialism and Soviet Imperialism; Latin Debt
- No.25: Communist Work in Unions; USSR Theories
- No.26: The Battle of Hormel
- No.27: Feminism & Pornography; Gorbachev's Reforms
- No.28: LRP & Australian WR Form Tendency
- No.29: Turmoil in the International Far Left
- No.30: Reflagging the Empire; Cent. America Peace Fraud
- No.31: After the Crash; Palestine Revolution
- No.32: Democrats' Jackson Dilemma; ANC vs. Workers
- No.33: Death Agony of Stalinism
- No.34: Massacre in Beijing; Women and the Family

Write for a complete list.

Price: \$1.00 per issue; \$25.00 for a full set.

Bush's Drug War: Against Whom?

Crack addiction is a dreadful social menace ravaging the cities of the United States, Colombia and now Europe. But it is not simply a matter of evil dealers and weak victims. The drug plague is a result of much broader social conditions — and that determines what the working people of the world ought to do about it.

South America, the main source of cocaine for crack, keeps sinking into a bottomless pit of economic depression and debt to imperialism. In the U.S., while the majority of users are white, drugs take a special toll among blacks and Latinos who see less and less chance to better their lot and little hope for the future. They bear the brunt of the crisis that's breaking up families and communities everywhere. From the standpoint of the future of the working class, the devastation of minority youth is destroying many who would otherwise be part of the coming revolutionary vanguard.

The street dealers' ruthlessness and disregard for people's lives is notorious. But it pales in the face of the utter indifference to anything but profits on the part of the drug lords; they are capitalists who run their businesses accordingly. Like them, the mainstream bourgeoisie and the U.S. government never hesitate to use the drug plague to safeguard their own interests.

BOURGEOIS HYPOCRISY

That is what George Bush and Congress are doing in pushing their demagogic campaign of police and military intervention. Even bourgeois commentators have noted that while tens of thousands of drug users are begging for treatment, the new money will go less for therapy and more for repression. Even that will be paid for by cutting social programs, extending the policy that helped drive many to drugs in the first place.

And that's not the end of the hypocrisy. The International Monetary Fund forced Bolivia to lay off tens of thousands of miners and government workers to cut

continued on page 24

Proletarian Revolution

Published by the Socialist Voice Publishing Co. for the League for the Revolutionary Party. ISSN: 0894-0754.

Editorial Board: Walter Dahl, Evelyn Kaye, Sy Landy, Eric Nacar, Bob Wolfe.

Production Staff: Leslie Howard, Jan Mills.

Subscriptions: \$7.00 for eight issues; \$15.00 for overseas airmail, supporting subscriptions and institutions.

Back issues: \$1.00 each. Make checks or money orders payable to Socialist Voice. Send to:

Socialist Voice
170 Broadway, Room 201
New York, NY 10038, USA

Special Subscription Rate

Workers currently on strike may subscribe to Proletarian Revolution at the special rate of \$1.00. Thanks to a special donation, prisoners may subscribe at no charge.

Pamphlets from the LRP and WR

See page 10 for information on pamphlets published by the LRP and Workers Revolution of Australia.

Poland:

Solidarity Regime Threatens Workers

The new Polish government, promoted by Lech Walesa and boasting a Solidarity prime minister, has been hailed on all sides as a victory for justice and the working class. It is nothing of the kind. On the contrary, it is a desperate attempt to save a hated and weakened state in the face of mass working-class opposition.

The popular frontist parliamentary bloc includes the ruling Stalinist bureaucrats and the social-democratic Solidarity leaders whom the Stalinists not long ago had imprisoned. It has been warmly welcomed by world capitalism, since its main purpose is to calm workers' struggles against intolerable living conditions so that Polish capital can be "restructured" at their expense.

Poland's stultified capitalist economy has been driven into the ground by decades of Stalinist exploitation, exacerbated by a multi-billion dollar debt to the West and the USSR. Inflation is rocketing past 100 percent. The value of the *zloty* is plummeting: at current black-market rates (which the state bank also trades at!), the average monthly wage is now under \$50. Public services have deteriorated terribly. Much industry is obsolete. Farming has long been small-scale and backward. Shortages of vital necessities are critical and constant. Free medical care, one of the mainstays of Stalinist "socialism," is limited; life expectancy is declining.

In the face of this collapse, the rulers see no alternative but to import traditional bourgeois methods to squeeze out more surplus value. That means inflationary shocks, mass unemployment, cutbacks in state benefits, factory speed-up, and all the techniques of austerity that Western workers know well. But this will hardly be enough. The bosses also hope for credits from the West, but so far Mitterrand, Kohl and Bush (even in his latest International Monetary Fund proposal) have offered only peanuts. Imperialist investors are waiting for evidence that Poland's militant workers are under control.

STALINISTS VOTED OUT

The new government grew out of the "round-table" agreement between Walesa and the Jaruzelski regime in April — under the pressure of two strike waves in 1988. Solidarity was legalized and allowed to run for Parliament. When the June elections demonstrated the mass hatred of the Stalinists' Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) and gave Solidarity a sweeping victory, a PZPR-headed government (agreed to by Solidarity) could not be palmed off on the masses. So Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a Catholic journalist who had been allied in the past with the PZPR, was brought in to save the day.

The PZPR will keep the interior and defense ministries controlling the police and military — as well as the strong presidency already granted to General Jaruzelski. This arrangement is presented as a guarantee that Poland will not break its military alliance with the USSR. But since both Solidarity and the West have made it absolutely clear that they have no intention of angering the Kremlin, that is not the main reason.

The point is that all the players want to prevent any

contamination of the armed forces by pro-worker influence — even in watered-down social-democratic form. After all, the bosses will need to use guns against the



V for Victimization. Bush celebrates imperialist collaboration with Solidarity and Stalinists.

workers again. Solidarity thinks it will have cleaner hands if the Stalinists retain that job.

ECONOMIC SHOCK THERAPY

Western spokesman advocate "shock therapy" for the Polish economy like that inflicted on Bolivia in 1985. Guided by U.S. advisers and the IMF, Bolivia slashed its budget deficit and halted endemic inflation by firing thousands of workers and loosening economic controls. With the same advisers, Poland is urged to do likewise in order to qualify for IMF approval. The idea is to administer a shock quickly, while Walesa and Mazowiecki still have the workers' allegiance.

Privatization of property does not mean a change in fundamental social relations. Poland's new finance minister described his plans for transforming nationalized industries: "Reprivatization does not mean the owners

must be physical persons. They can be agencies or funds, as often in the West." (*New York Times*, September 9.) He confirms a point we have often made: state ownership is not incompatible with capitalist property.

Although some Stalinist conservatives object to the new turn, many government officials and plant managers have already joined forces with private capital. Under the recent "liberal" PZPR prime minister Rakowski, they established themselves as independent bosses by buying state industries and getting state funds at bargain rates. Western bourgeois ideologists like the *Economist* magazine defend these corrupt privatization schemes: anything goes in the name of exploitation.

BETRAYAL IN THE NAME OF SOLIDARITY

Walesa's politics are rooted in nationalism: the false idea that the interests of all Poles are fundamentally the same. For the sake of "democracy," he calls for a return to capitalism. By this he means private ownership, but this is simply the shell for extracting deeper sacrifices. In the same spirit, parliamentary Solidarity is already playing a traditional social-democratic role, using its standing among workers to help smooth exploitation. Walesa's first act after Mazowiecki was appointed prime minister was to call for a moratorium on strikes. "It is our government," he tells them.

So far Polish workers have gone along. But it would be a disaster for them to surrender their strongest defense weapon in the face of a regime backed by every major ruling class on the globe. We may soon see Walesa and Mazowiecki approving police suppression of the strikes that will inevitably break out.

Solidarity, a 10-million strong union movement before it was outlawed in 1981, is shrunk and divided. Walesa's self-appointed parliamentary group includes intellectuals, private businessmen, and Catholic

activists — but few workers. Some union groups have split away in an attempt to defend workers' interests. But a few well-known unionists have gone along with Walesa's no-strike pledge. Thus the despised official unions led by elements in the PZPR can demagogically portray themselves as the only true defenders of the workers.

Solidarity's divisions are not new. Walesa has always stood for compromise with the bosses against the workers' most militant demands. In March 1981 when Solidarity was at the height of its strength, he unilaterally cancelled a threatened general strike against police brutality that could have toppled the Stalinist regime. In 1984 he backed Margaret Thatcher's battle against British coal miners — while underground Solidarity sent messages of support to fellow workers. In 1988 he promised to help smash strikes in the interest of accommodation. Now he has the added prestige of a Solidarity cabinet for his maneuvers against the workers.

THE RIGHT-WING DANGER

If the workers allow themselves to be politically disarmed, if they do not create a revolutionary leadership for resistance against the bosses, they will find that the rulers can dispense with Solidarity. Capital will then turn to its only real solution for Poland: a hard-line, even fascist, regime that can impose austerity without bothering with persuasion. Depending on circumstances, Jaruzelski, Walesa or even Cardinal Jozef Glemp could serve as a heroic "man on a white horse" to rescue Poland and international capital. The West will then happily invest to exploit Poland's experienced industrial workforce at third-world wages.

In this light, the blatant anti-Semitism of Glemp and others in the Polish hierarchy is a warning sign. Anti-Semitism has been the stock-in-trade not only of

Arms and the State

The Spartacist League is relieved that the Polish armed forces will remain under Stalinist ministers. *Workers Vanguard* (September 1) wrote:

"For anyone familiar with even the 'A' of the 'ABC's' of Marxism, this does not (yet) constitute a counterrevolution. The Stalinists still head the police and army, those 'armed bodies of men' which constitute the core of state power."

The Spartacists think that the overthrow of the Stalinist state by the workers would be counterrevolutionary. And they interpret the ongoing privatization and "democratization" of Polish capital to be a counterrevolution. Hence their satisfaction with Stalinist participation in the new cabinet. Things may be bad, but at least they haven't gone all the way.

The Spartacists would be less pleased, and less cocksure in their comprehension of the Polish state, had they paid attention to the words of General Florian Siwicki. He is the Stalinist reappointed as defense minister by Prime Minister Mazowiecki, whom the Spartacists *do* consider counterrevolutionary.

"Now it depends on each of us, all Poles, whether we will be equal to the challenges of the future," including **"the formation of a democratic, parliamentary and civil form of state. In**

backing the changes taking place in the state, we are also changing the shape of the army." (*New York Times*, August 29.)

That is, the head of the "armed bodies of men which constitute the core of state power" is eager for his forces to go along when the "form of state" changes hands. The reason this doesn't violate Marxist ABC's is that the old regime, like the new, defends capitalist exploitation. Whether this occurs primarily through state or private property is of secondary importance. In both cases the state belongs to the exploiters and exists to repress the workers.

Given Siwicki's dedication to a "democratic" state — code words for pluralist private property — we can anticipate that armed force will be used to remove protesting workers who occupy factories scheduled to be turned over to private owners. What form of property will the army then be defending? What state will it be the army of? And which side will the Spartacists be on? Certainly their *theory* gives no clue.

Mazowiecki and Solidarity, like their Stalinist partners, are not overthrowing the exploiters' state but trying to reform *and reinforce* it. Unlike the Spartacists and social democrats, Marxists urgently hope that both fail.■

traditional right wingers but of the Stalinist state bureaucracy, too. The admiration expressed by both Jaruzelski and Walesa for pre-war dictator Pilsudski also rings ominous bells.

At the moment, the racist and nationalist base for fascism is split between church-linked anti-Communist groups like the KPN and the hard-Stalinist wing of the PZPR. But in the USSR, the affinity of the pro-Czarist, fascist Pamyat with the Stalinist wing of the Russian

regime is not on their side. The 35 percent of Polish voters who boycotted the rigged round-table elections is a positive sign, as are the reports that groups of workers have greeted Walesa with slogans like "We need bread, not a prime minister."

There are leftist working-class oppositionists in Poland who stood against the round-table bloc: the Workers' Group of Solidarity led by Andrzej Gwiazda, and the Polish Socialist Party/Democratic Revolution.



Warsaw: Workers line up at butcher's, as Solidarity lines up with Jaruzelski's butchers.

Communist Party shows that the gap between these chauvinists is hardly unbridgeable. The floundering of Solidarity's social-democratic and liberal wings will encourage fascistic tendencies.

TASKS OF THE LEFT

Parliamentary Solidarity has proved itself a reformist bulwark of capitalist exploitation, whether state or private. Contrary to common opinion on the left (see box), in this sense Solidarity is counterrevolutionary. It will sabotage any program that endangers capitalist relations between workers and bosses.

Proletarian revolutionists — authentic communists — would be proposing programs like repudiating the international debt, encouraging the workers to take over the factories and establishing centralized workers' control. The working class has to prepare to take power into its own hands by building a revolutionary party and reconstituted soviets like the MKS of August 1980. Solidarity will strive in every way to prevent the workers from making any such moves. Its government deserves not the workers' allegiance but their enmity.

The most advanced proletarian fighters now face the task of proving to their fellow workers that the new

We have as yet only partial information on how these groups plan to struggle.

According to the British journal *International Socialism* (September), the Workers Group "wants Solidarity to play a trade union role by becoming more like the union of 1981." The PPS/RD supports strikes, in opposition to the temporary moratorium endorsed by another anti-Stalinist group, Fighting Solidarity, "to see what the government does"; it also demands that Mazowiecki institute "workers' control of production through self-management committees." These formulas indicate significant breaks from the reformist line but still fail to pose a clear alternative to the popular-frontist regime.

A key step would be to link the Polish workers' conditions and struggles with those of the Soviet workers, whose recent mass strikes have brought them onto the political stage in their own name. (As another article in this issue shows, at least some of the striking Soviet miners were inspired by the Polish events of 1980-81.) An upsurge of parallel Soviet and Polish workers' movements would place proletarian revolution on the agenda across the world.

It is essential for working-class leftists outside Poland as well to expose the regime's true character —

Solidarity and the Left

When Solidarity arose in 1980-81 it inspired three competing positions among leftists. One was that Solidarity was counterrevolutionary, in the sense that it threatened the socialist or proletarian character of the Stalinist state. This view was held by the U.S. Communist Party and the Spartacist League, who naturally supported the crushing of the Polish working class by General Jaruzelski's army in December 1981. The Spartacists also derided the idea that the Catholic church and Western bankers stood behind the Polish regime against the workers.

A variant, less extreme line was that Solidarity rather than the Stalinists embodied the danger of "capitalist restoration" — that is, privatization and free-market anarchy — that would open Poland up to imperialism.

The second alternative was that Solidarity's leadership, or at least part of it, defended the true interests of the working class. This was claimed by the SWP, which admired Walesa, and by Workers Power (now merged into the U.S. Solidarity group), which called Jacek Kuron's KOR a "revolutionary force."

Against all such notions we argued that Solidarity's leadership was *reformist*. It was dedicated to the preservation of capitalism in Poland by winning a few sopas for the workers and giving them a "voice" in politics. While the Stalinists incurred massive debts and tied the Polish economy to the West, Solidarity also welcomed an exploitative Western link. Their *common* strategy, endorsed as well by all the chieftains of international capitalism, was to incorporate the workers and encourage "democratic" private capitalism — in order to defend the Polish state against the danger of proletarian revolution. We wrote, for example:

"Walesa, Kania, Wojtyla, Wyszinski and Brzezinski stand shoulder to shoulder, warning the

Polish workers to restrain themselves. Not only because of the Russian threat ... but because the [Polish] Stalinist state is desperately weak and needs all the help it can get. The economy is in shambles ... and the popularity of Solidarnosc ... shows that the organized workers could shut down the economy at will. And if they can do that, why stop short of overthrowing the government? The possibility of a working-class revolution looms in every bourgeois mind ..." (*Socialist Voice* No. 12.)

Names have changed but the reformism continues. Current Polish events confirm our analysis in full. The governmental bloc among Solidarity, the Stalinists and the church is plain for all to see. No one can seriously believe today that Walesa & Co. are a revolutionary (or counterrevolutionary) threat against Jaruzelski. They are as nationalist and as staunch in defense of the rulers' state as any reformist trade union bureaucrat or social democrat in the West. Kuron, for example, is today a cabinet member and a leading aide of Walesa.

As for the West, bourgeois statesmen hailed Jaruzelski's selection as president as warmly as Mazowiecki's as prime minister. It is stability and opportunities for exploitation that they want, not "anarchy" or the overthrow of the regime.

We were able to grasp the character of Poland's politics so accurately because we understood the class nature of the Stalinist system. Those who imagined that Poland's was a progressive system saw opposition to the regime as a threat to the workers' alleged gains. Whereas those who saw "Communism" as a worse evil than capitalism could hope that church- and West-oriented types like Walesa offered a way out.

Our analysis that Stalinism is statified capitalism showed clearly that the underlying interests of both reformists and imperialists would bring them to the state's defense. That is precisely what has happened. ■

but as with the social-democratic and labor parties in the West, many left leaders play along with Solidarity's deception.

WESTERN LEFT'S REFORMISM

Take the position of Joanne Landy, a prominent pro-Solidarity activist in the U.S. The new government, she says, has three roads open to it:

"It could conciliate with the existing bureaucratic system, attempting to provide it with a more human and efficient face. In that case it will surely fail. It could move to restructure the system along Western capitalist lines. This might succeed, but only at the cost of betraying the Polish workers whose struggles and resistance brought it to power. Finally, it could move to restructure society along democratic socialist lines. While this is difficult, it is not impossible, and is the outcome we socialists must struggle to support." (*Guardian*, August 30.)

Not impossible for a reformist/Stalinist/bourgeois cabinet to bring about democratic socialism? Such an idea makes sense only if by "democratic socialist lines"

Landy means a Western-style social democratic government serving capitalism. But that is no third road: it is the same as the capitalist restructuring Walesa wants, which she correctly calls betrayal. The only way to prevent such an outcome is by fighting *against* the Walesa-Mazowiecki government, not struggling alongside it.

Another left view does not pretend that parliamentary Solidarity can bring about socialism but nevertheless accepts the reformist course as inevitable:

"If it is possible to acquire wealth and privileges other than through the political apparatus, people of the *nomenklatura* may be more willing to vacate their political positions and seek social advancement elsewhere. ... Those who favor further democratization should earnestly wish them success." (David Ost, *Telos*, Spring 1989.)

Corruption as a way of life is hardly a new idea for super-cynical leftists. But this is the first time we have seen it defended publicly as a strategy for democratization! How absurd the dictates of practicality can be when socialists delete the words "proletarian revolution" from their vocabulary. ■

Soviet Strikers Shake Gorbachev

The mass strike wave by coal miners in July shook the Soviet regime to its roots. Starting in Siberia, it spread to the Ukraine, the far North and Kazakhstan. It was the first major working-class response to President Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts at reforming the floundering Soviet economic and political structure.

Washington Post reporter Kevin Klose noted the significance of this working-class struggle:

"Unlike the bitter ethno-religious strife in Central Asia and the Caucasus regions, the coal-field strikes carry with them the seeds of truly mass involvement by millions who are joined across ethnic, religious and geographic barriers by their common dissatisfaction with industrial life."



Striking Kuznetsk miners' banner calls for 'Power to the People's Soviets.' Shades of the real soviets of 1917.

Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness), which permits public organized dissent, gave the miners the opportunity to be widely heard. And *perestroika* (restructuring), through which the ruling class hopes to save the economy by increasing exploitation through openly capitalist methods, has intensified workers' need to resist.

PROTEST AGAINST LIVING CONDITIONS

The strikers' main demands centered around their grim conditions of life and work. Although they are some of the highest paid workers in the country, miners are among the most abused. They face accidents and disease on the job — and shortages of housing, water and electricity, as well as of ordinary consumer goods like milk, meat, produce and soap.

There is even a shortage of breathable air in the mining villages. Gas escaping from worked-out mines and piled-up tailings burns eyes and mouths. "Sometimes this town stinks so bad that the air down here is better than the air up there," one Siberian miner said.

The miners also demanded the dissolution of the new "cooperative" enterprises inspired by Gorbachev. These businesses are often paper disguises for private exploitation. They charge many times what goods cost

in the state stores; thus they serve only the bureaucrats and rising private capitalists, not even the best-paid workers. They also profiteer by siphoning off goods and materials from state supplies, and so are seen as a major cause of the endless shortages.

GOVERNMENT CONCESSIONS

The strikers forced the government to make many economic concessions, although they accepted promises which may never be fulfilled. The regime cannot afford to change the appalling conditions of the mining villages and similar industrial hellholes.

Gorbachev is a clever politician. Despite the workers' threat to the satisfied capitalist class he leads, he

proclaimed that the miners were acting in support of *perestroika*. He hopes to get rid of layers of bureaucrats who do little but safeguard their own interests, and the miners' demands proved useful to this end. But he also called the strike movement a "grave social problem for the whole country," and afterwards demanded a ban on strikes through 1990.

These functionaries are to be replaced by, first of all, entrepreneurial types who will squeeze out more surplus value from the workers; and secondly by social-democratic ideologists and professionals whose intellectual efforts will be devoted to keeping workers in line. Witness the admiration for the "Swedish model" by so many of Gorbachev's aides.

POLITICAL DEMANDS

The strike demands extended to the political realm as well. In many localities they called for the dismissal of notoriously corrupt officials and for open elections. They want an end to the bureaucrats' economic privileges. Some demanded revising the Soviet Constitution to include individual rights. In Vorkuta (site of the most notorious slave-labor camps under Stalin, where Trotskyists had once led a mass sit-down strike) miners

demanded the abolition of the Communist Party's constitutional monopoly of political rights.

One demand (which the regime conceded) reflects illusions in market-type reforms as an alternative to bureaucratic domination of the economy: the right of local mines to reinvest the foreign currency earned from coal exports. But local control of investment is no answer: the fact that many mines are obsolescent means that opening them up to world competition will lead to shutting them down. A centralized, socialist solution is required — not an extension of the sectoralism inherent in the Stalinist system which *perestroika* encourages.

For example, a key reason for the miners' shortages is the USSR's backward, sectoralized food distribution system. Moscow insists that Kemerovo province in Siberia feed itself, refusing even "imports" from neighboring regions — even though its population is increasing and farm production is falling. The allegedly "planned" Soviet economy is tremendously wasteful of labor and resources. This is the chief source of many workers' mixed feelings that Western-style capitalism might do better.

ECHOES OF REVOLUTIONARY SOVIETS

Whatever the worth of the gains wrung from the regime, the miners achieved significant steps forward in self-organization. As a sign of contempt for the

supine trade union bureaucrats, miners in the Ukrainian Donetsk region insisted on a "reduction of 50 percent in union staff." Union officials were forced into the role of tea-servers to the strikers, where for once they could do something useful.

When Soviet leaders, including Gorbachev, tried to talk tough and warn about "anarchy" in industry, one strike leader in the Donbass replied, "There is absolutely no danger of political instability. We have taken power into our hands." (*Financial Times*, July 20.)

Strike committees did virtually take power in the mining towns, echoing the tradition of workers' councils that originated in the Russian soviets of the 1905 and 1917 revolutions. These have nothing in common with the bureaucrats' "soviets" of today.

One reporter noted the parallels to Gdansk, Poland, in August 1980, when the workers' movement opened a decade of turmoil throughout the Stalinist bloc:

"There are now some hundred thousand strikers and almost 15 paralyzed cities where the same scenes are being played that one could believe are taken directly from a "remake" of the Polish summer of 1980.

"In all these cities, the [strikers'] meetings are in effect permanent, generally in front of the Party buildings and even in the most remote neighborhoods. Loudspeakers broadcast the news, reports of the negotiations and communiqués ...

"... In the cities of the Kuzbas, where the militia [the police] have practically disappeared, strikers' detachments patrol the streets. They drive away philanthropic outsiders who offer vodka to the pit occupiers, everywhere prevent access to the bars and impose such order that the regional officers of the Ministry of the Interior declared in *Pravda* that 'criminality has sharply diminished.'

"In Gdansk as well there was this obsession with alcohol and order, the reputation of the movement. And as at Gdansk, there was formed on Sunday a regional strike committee charged with elaborating a new platform of global demands." (Bernard Guetta in *Le Monde*, July 18.)

The miners's strikes have ended, but the precedent has been established for massive and highly political working-class action in the Soviet Union. As Guetta noted a few days later:

"The Kuzbas mines are again functioning normally on July 21, and, according to Tass, workers are returning bit by bit in the Don Basin in the Ukraine. But despite this 'normalization' which seems to be confirmed, several strike committees have announced that they will not completely cease their activities. They intend to maintain surveillance over the application of the accords reached with the government over the wages and living conditions of the workers."

Another reporter caught the flavor of the debate among the workers in Siberia's Kuznetsk region:

"The strike committee is sitting in almost permanent session in the miners' Palace of Culture, basking in the euphoria of apparently total popular support. ...

"The miners are adamant that their demands are only economic. They are not looking for political

The 'Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie'

A group of Soviet workers from the Urals wrote as follows to Peter Siuda, a leader of the suppressed Novocheerkassk strike of 1962:

"The local bureaucrats [are] opponents of the revolutionary renewal, in whose hands, unfortunately, the real political power rests. This is a treacherous class of exploiters of the toilers which uses as a cover that which is most sacred to the working class — Marxism — and passes itself off as the true representatives of the party of the working class, of Soviet power, of the people; and against them one must fight skillfully with our own arms.

"Of course, after this deception of the workers, unprecedented in the history of humanity, it will take a certain amount of time for the course of democracy and *glasnost* to yield fruit: the dictatorship of the working class, its full power through its own institutions — the soviets, in their Leninist understanding. ... We would like to know your advice on the methods of struggle against the enemies of the working class — the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, or, as Lenin called them, the 'sovbours'." (Cited by David Mandel in *The Socialist Register*, 1989.)

One of the remaining gains of the 1917 revolution is that some Soviet workers still know Lenin as the revolutionist he was rather than the icon the "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" has made of him.

Judging from this excerpt, these workers seem to trust Gorbachev's *glasnost* and "revolutionary renewal" and to think that only the *local* bureaucrats form an alien capitalist class. If so, these are errors they will have to learn to correct. Their overall lack of illusions will be of immense value in doing so. ■

changes. 'We're a new trade union, to a certain extent,' said Mr. Dimidov [head of the strike committee], 'rather like your Western trade unions.'

"He is soft-spoken to the point of diffidence, and scrupulously democratic when members of the strike committee want to disagree. 'We are the new Solidarity,' one committee member insists. 'We don't trust Mr. Gorbachev.'

"The chairman begs to differ. 'Workers in Gdansk had many political demands. We are putting forth only economic ones.'

"Yet they admit you cannot really separate the two. The very fact that the strike committee exists is a political statement. That is a tiger Mr. Gorbachev still has to learn how to ride." (Quentin Peel in the London *Financial Times*, July 24.)

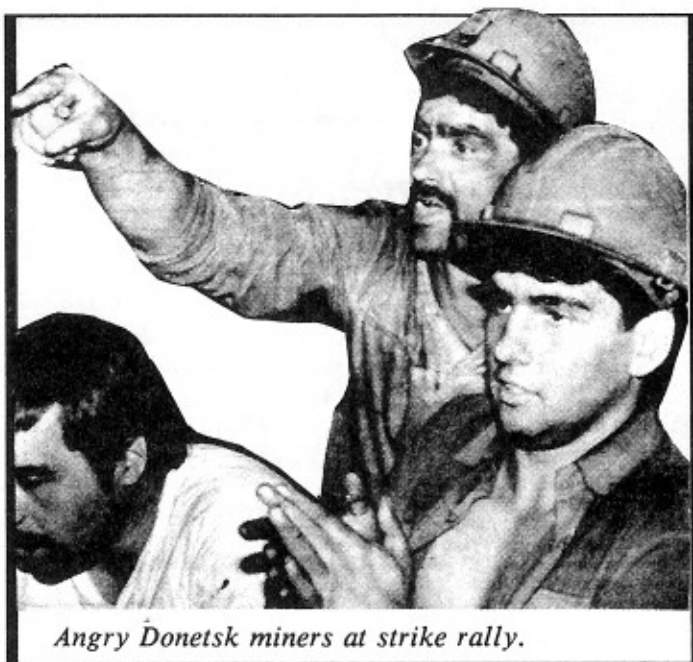
WORKERS' ORGANIZATION CONTINUES

In September, 140 representatives of miners from the Ukraine and Siberia met in Moscow to form a National Union of Strike Committees. As of this writing, they had not decided whether to operate as an opposition within the official unions or as a rival union movement. Under this pressure, the official All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions adopted radical demands in defense of the workers, demands that these bureaucrats somehow never thought of before.

These reports show that the workers, despite mixed consciousness, have begun to build independent *proletarian* institutions. This is the way to the only alternative to capitalism: workers' power. The key will be to create an authentic communist party based on the socialist and internationalist interests of the working class.

But they cannot simply demand "more." Under the crisis conditions the USSR faces, "more" for all workers spells disaster for the ruling bureaucracy. The Soviet working class has to fight for a total change, a proletarian revolution.

If the workers do not create their class alternative, then the road is open for sections of the ruling class to



Angry Donetsk miners at strike rally.

go beyond *glasnost* to a hard solution. The talk by some Soviet intellectuals that the masses are "not ready" for democracy is indicative. They seek to end the "chaos" of workers' strikes and nationalist upheavals (which also reflect popular needs), by turning to a Bonapartist strongman. That could be Gorbachev, or a Boris Yeltsin, or a military man, possibly in alliance with the Pamyat fascists. Such a reawakened Stalinism, as in China, will be a Stalinism closely tied to Western capital, keeping labor cheap and selling it on the world market.

The danger of Stalinism confirms our analysis that openness and "democracy" are simply tools for sharpening exploitation through *perestroika*. When *glasnost* fails, it will be jettisoned. The time for the workers to organize, not just unions but an authentic communist party, is now. The task is political: overthrow of the capitalist state.■

Imaginary Workers?

On the eve of the Soviet miners' strikes, a "post-Marxist" academic theorist pontificated:

"The Soviets' deployment of *perestroika* caught almost everyone by surprise. Although for years the unorthodox Left has described the USSR as on the verge of collapse and desperately in need of political reforms, this insight was systematically occluded by an imaginary context of working-class militancy. Consequently, the possibility of reforms was always predicated on 'growing labor struggles' which, if present at all, have had no direct impact on recent Soviet policies. ...

"In the three countries in which economic reforms are being seriously considered, the USSR, Poland and Hungary, they were triggered by acute economic crises and masterminded from above." (Paul Piccone, *Telos*, Spring 1989.)

That is, the working class has had nothing to do with the events in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Marx must indeed be dead! And for middle-class academics it must be true that the ideas for change

come not from below but are "masterminded from above."

But somehow the bourgeoisie thinks otherwise. The London *Financial Times*, which keeps an eye out for dangerous working-class activity, observed:

"Reforms were generally made — especially in Poland — in response to popular explosions In the 1980s, in the Soviet Union, it became obvious to an influential group of relatively young party leaders and analysts — the group from which Gorbachev emerged — that further such explosions were inevitable unless anticipatory action were taken. Hence *perestroika*, or 'restructuring'." (September 26.)

This is obviously bourgeois propaganda, an attempt to drum up a scare over the unwashed masses and give undeserved credence to the "unorthodox Left." The problem with us non-post-Marxists is that we pay too close attention to mass unrest, probably because of our subjective class bias. Academic detachment proves its usefulness as a corrective once again.■



Subscribe Now!

Workers Revolution

(Australia)

SUBSCRIPTIONS
10 issues for \$5.00

Name

Address

.....

Zip

Workers Revolution Pamphlets

ZIONISM AND THE LEFT
How Socialist Fight and the Socialist Organiser
Alliance made their peace with Zionism. 50¢

**THE UNRESOLVED CONTRADICTIONS
OF TONY CLIFF**
A review of Tom O'Lincoln's pamphlet
on state capitalism. 50¢

**PERMANENT REVOLUTION
and Fighting Capitalist Attacks in Australia 50¢**

Order from Socialist Voice or:
Workers Revolution, GPO Box 1729P, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia

LRP Pamphlets

**PERMANENT REVOLUTION
AND POST-WAR STALINISM**
Two Views on the "Russian Question"

Articles by Chris Bailey of the Internationalist Faction
(formerly in the WRP) of Britain, and Walter Dahl
and Sy Landy of the LRP. \$3.00

**BOLIVIA: THE REVOLUTION
THE "FOURTH INTERNATIONAL" BETRAYED**

Documents written in the 1950s by the Vern-Ryan
Tendency of the U.S. SWP — the only group in the
degenerated Fourth International to oppose its
capitulation to bourgeois nationalism. \$1.00

**REFORMISM AND "RANK AND FILE":
The Communist Alternative**

Articles from Proletarian Revolution \$1.00

CAPITALISM IN THE SOVIET UNION
The Rise and Decay of Stalinism

Articles from Proletarian Revolution and
Socialist Voice; expanded edition. \$3.00

"NO DRAFT" IS NO ANSWER!
The Communist Position on Stopping Imperialist War

Articles from Socialist Voice, plus writings by Lenin
and Trotsky on conscription and militarism. \$1.00

Order from: Socialist Voice, 170 Broadway, Room 201, New York NY 10038, USA

New York

continued from page 1

Rarely have liberal illusions in electoral images been more explicit — or more unwarranted. Given his moderate record and minimal promises, the overwhelming likelihood is that Dinkins will accomplish no more than any other capitalist politician. Indeed, taking office at a time when the capitalist ruling class is demanding intensified austerity for the masses, his role will be to carry out that policy. The people who danced at Koch's defeat will have little to celebrate in Dinkins.

Ironically, it was Koch's racism that enabled a black candidate to win. Early in the primary race, polls showed Koch being trounced by either Dinkins or the Republican Rudolph Giuliani. Koch's unpopularity reflected not only hatred by blacks and Latinos but widespread disgust with corruption by his cronies and political allies.

DINKINS' LOW-KEY STRATEGY

Dinkins strategy was to duck difficult issues in order not to antagonize anyone, hoping that Koch would hang himself; he ran an uninspiring campaign that deliberately downplayed his position as a black candidate. Meanwhile Koch's television commercials filled with black and Latino faces flooded the airwaves, and he began to surge in the polls.

In These Times writer Salim Muwakkil captured the growing mood of dissatisfaction in Dinkins' camp:

"Dinkins' quest to become the city's first black mayor has failed to fire up the city's African-American community. Thus, despite a campaign featuring a wide range of interracial support, the Dinkins candidacy is generating scant enthusiasm among the grass roots of his core constituency. Many black analysts blame this on his conciliatory political style. Others claim his team just hasn't done the necessary legwork." (August 30.)

But just when it appeared that Dinkins' strategy would allow Koch to downplay the racist character of his administration, the calm exploded. On August 23, a gang of white youths in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn attacked four blacks. When it was over, Yusuf Hawkins, 16, was dead from bullet wounds. His "crime" was to walk into a white, Italian neighborhood where blacks were not welcome. Yusuf Hawkins joined a long list of victims of racist murder during the Koch years — Willie Turks, Michael Stewart, Eleanor Bumpers, Michael Griffith, and more.

BENSONHURST AND THE CAMPAIGN

Koch's racism resurfaced when he accused blacks who demonstrated against racist murder in Bensonhurst of inciting whites. Having been lulled by both Koch and Dinkins, suddenly people remembered *why* they hated the mayor's guts. Bensonhurst accomplished what Dinkins had failed to do: arouse the anger of blacks and many whites at the filth emanating from City Hall.

Concern over the latest racial murder was mixed with maneuvers over the primary. Dinkins supporters feared that the protests in Bensonhurst would cause whites to flock to Koch. Similar considerations account

for the mayor's accusation against the demonstrators.

Protest hit a high point on August 31, the "day of outrage," when 10,000 people, mostly black, took to the streets and clashed with police on the Brooklyn Bridge. Violence broke out when cops prevented the marchers from crossing the bridge to reach City Hall. Marchers fought back with rocks and bottles; scores of demonstrators and cops were injured. Yet even in the face of this assault, Dinkins stuck to his conciliatory approach and kept his distance from the protestors.

Dinkins' victory has for the moment silenced much of the criticism. Bourgeois commentators praise his clever strategy, while the grumbling from black militants and left supporters have given way to good old-fashioned pragmatism: if it works, why knock it?

WHO BUTTERS DINKINS' BREAD?

Those who believe that by supporting Dinkins they are building a movement against racism and social injustice have little to point to in his campaign. Dinkins doesn't even pretend to be building a movement, as Jesse Jackson did with his rubber-stamp Rainbow Coa-



Ed Koch, Stanley Hill of DC 37, David Dinkins and Jesse Jackson are dubious about reconciliation but capitalist interests demand it.

lition. Dinkins' failure to mobilize the black community was deliberate. He is doing what nearly all Democrats have done in recent years: moving to the "center" in an attempt to appeal to white middle-class voters.

Dinkins' "conciliatory nature" is a code word for subordinating necessary social struggles in order to gain votes, particularly among liberal Jewish voters who were a solid basis for Koch in previous elections. Thus he boasts of supporting Israel "100 percent" — despite its gross anti-Arab racism and support for every reactionary regime on the globe, including South Africa. He also makes a point of having denounced the anti-Semitism of Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan, a demagogue who articulates black outrage. This "Jewish campaign" was a source of much discontent by militant blacks. Muwakkil quotes an anonymous "publisher of a

militant African-American-owned weekly”:

“Dinkins is so concerned about showing how reasonable he is and how anti-Semitic he’s not, the man has almost completely forgotten where his bread is buttered. Why is he bragging about denouncing Farrakhan, when his core constituency looks to Farrakhan as a hero? Who is he trying to please?”

Good questions, since Dinkins (like liberals generally) finds it easier to come down on the anti-Semitism of Farrakhan than on the more potent racism of white politicians. But most of the left only obscures the answer, since they criticize Dinkins from the popular frontist position of trying to work in the Democratic Party and move it to the left. From this standpoint, Dinkins’ liberalism (he is even a member of the Democratic Socialists of America) is a plus, but his conciliationism and unwillingness to mobilize black militancy are the other side of the same coin. They are exactly the attributes that make him acceptable to the white-dominated ruling class.

A “LAW AND ORDER” CAMPAIGN

Who indeed “butters Dinkins’ bread?” Just look at his background. Dinkins has long been part of a black political elite tied hand and foot to the Democrats and capitalism. His claims to champion the interests of the working class and minority poor are belied by his past support for Koch. Dinkins’ break with Koch reflects the need to contain the anger of workers and blacks and prevent them from turning away from the Democrats. But it equally reflects the dissatisfaction of black politicians with the mayor’s failure to respect their patronage “rights” and other privileges.

Dinkins has no intention of rocking the boat. At every opportunity he reassures the bourgeoisie that he will keep things from getting out of hand. His conciliatory approach embodies the lie that the interests of the ruling class and the oppressed masses can be reconciled.

Dinkins’ main slogan, “vote your hopes and not your fears,” was aimed at reaching white voters by reassuring them he was not a black militant. As the *New York Times* pointed out after the primary, Dinkins was seen by white voters (and by the ruling class, we might add) as “unthreatening” — one pundit styled him a political Bill Cosby. As a result he won over 30% of white votes, far more than expected.

Dinkins apparently succeeded in convincing many whites that he was the best candidate for preventing racial conflict from breaking out. It is typical of this racist society that when a black youth is brutally murdered for being black in the wrong place, the main concern of the political establishment — white and black — is to reassure whites that *blacks* are not about to commit violence.

PANDERING TO WHITE FEARS

Reality is thus stood on its head. A race war is a greater threat to blacks, as Howard Beach and Bensonhurst show. Yet political hacks and the media are preoccupied with *whites’* fears that blacks might retaliate. As well, the avalanche of political rhetoric demanding “peace between the races” and an “end to polarization” equates racists with their victims. A war, not peace, is

necessary — not between races but against racists.

Dinkins, like the other candidates, pandered to the distorted picture. His most significant proposal was an “anti-wilding law” which, in Koch-like fashion, lumped the attack on the white Central Park jogger with the murder of Yusuf Hawkins by a racist gang. This fits in perfectly with his efforts to join the other candidates in showing he is tough on crime. He ran ads calling for more cops — forgetting that his victory was in large part due to an angry reaction against the mounting violence against minorities by cops and others.

Dinkins’ victory will be a test of bourgeois liberalism. Two other well-known liberals won primary races for top City Hall positions: Elizabeth Holtzman for city comptroller and Ruth Messinger for Manhattan borough president; another, Charles Hynes, won the nomination for Brooklyn district attorney.

Holtzman, the current Brooklyn D.A., showed how liberals compromise with racism in her handling of the Bensonhurst murder defendants. Four ringleaders were charged at first only with assault. Even when second-degree murder indictments came down, they remained free on low bail, with little protest from white liberals. (Dinkins, of course, has not criticized his running-mate Holtzman.) The contrast with the treatment of the eight black defendants in the Central Park case is stark: initially denied any bail at all, they were pilloried in the press from the start.

BLACK MILITANTS FALL INTO LINE

Even though after the Hawkins murder Dinkins kept his distance from any expression of black militancy, he benefited from the reactions of both blacks and whites. By focusing attention on the racial polarization of the Koch years, Bensonhurst won Dinkins the support of white voters, even prejudiced ones, who fear an explosion of racial violence. At the same time, it forced blacks, including militants and nationalists, to fall into line. Racial solidarity and anti-Koch sentiment was so high that most of Dinkins’ black critics caved in and endorsed him, objections and all.

The Reverend Al Sharpton, who led the Bensonhurst marches, is a favorite target of the bourgeois media. Sharpton had refused to support Jesse Jackson in 1988 because of his compromises with the Democrats. His forceful expression of justified black anger is undermined by the fact that he is an admitted FBI stool pigeon and a charlatan who offers blacks no solution. Sharpton has influence over many blacks largely because the rest of the black leadership is so vacillating. But lacking any strategy for a serious mass-struggle alternative, he ended up endorsing Dinkins — certainly no less compromising a politician than Jackson.

The *City Sun*, which also stood aloof from Jackson last year because of his softness over the Howard Beach murder and his failure to vigorously champion the black interests, made similar criticisms of the more conservative Dinkins campaign yet nevertheless endorsed him:

“We have had vigorous disagreements with David N. Dinkins and have criticized his shortcomings on many issues that affect this city’s Black community, but we are clear about one thing: If there ever was a time to put aside these differences and deal with the larger issue of what is confronting us,

both as a people and as a city, this is it. We believe strongly that no candidate in the current crop vying for the city's highest offices is as capable of resurrecting its spirit as Dinkins is."

This is hardly a resounding endorsement from a black paper. The editorial gropes for reasons to support Dinkins. Unable to point to any militant program or struggle he has championed, the editors resort to commonplaces: the candidate is "compassionate and sensi-

capitalists attack workers' living standards, the more the system attempts to pit group against group, to divide the working class along racial, ethnic and gender lines in a fierce struggle for survival.

Just as police racism against blacks worsened under Benjamin Ward, Koch's black police commissioner, so will it continue under a Dinkins administration. The understandable desire of the black community to have one of its own in office is precisely what capitalism will use as a club against it.



1199 rally: Jackson and Dinkins with union head Dennis Rivera. Woo today, screw tomorrow.

tive." They are reduced to the only real argument for blacks to vote for Dinkins: "he's one of us." Nevertheless, given the absence of any powerful white-led or interracial institution that is willing to give more than lip-service to black pride, black anger or especially black fears in the present dangerous climate, that argument is a weighty one.

CAPITALISM AND RACISM

The primary campaign showed that the capitalists are anxious to avoid racial conflict and explosions by blacks. Yet the very conditions created by bourgeois rule insure that racial polarization will grow. Ronald Reagan and Ed Koch are just two examples of the more open racism that has become acceptable again. That whites have voted in greater numbers for Jesse Jackson and now Dinkins should not obscure this reality.

By helping to defuse black anger, Dinkins helps insure that no real solution to racism develops. Racist violence is not simply the result of bad ideas in the abstract; it grows because capitalism has no solution to its crisis other than to squeeze the masses. The more the

LABOR BUREAUCRATS' SUPPORT

In addition to his base among blacks, Dinkins got substantial support from the labor bureaucracy. Except for a few, mostly in construction, Dinkins had nearly every major New York trade union in his corner — the hospital workers' Local 1199, the United Federation of Teachers, various Communication Workers locals, and the largest public employee union, District Council 37. Many have largely black memberships.

After Jesse Jackson's success in New York City in the 1988 presidential primary, the bureaucrats saw an opportunity to regain credibility among black workers by backing Dinkins against the vulnerable Koch. Koch had stuck his foot in his mouth by viciously attacking Jackson during the campaign, an act that paved the way for the Dinkins candidacy. Jackson's success showed that Koch could be beaten, and the bureaucrats saw a chance to regain influence in City Hall. Support for Dinkins was also a way of placating workers disgusted with the bureaucrats' capitulations to Koch's attacks on public employees throughout his tenure.

Dinkins got labor's support cheaply. He made no real commitments and has done nothing for workers. Early in the

campaign he made noises about opposing the state Taylor Law, which prevents public employees from striking. But ruling-class criticism of this position made him drop it like a lead balloon. (The bourgeoisie's concern over Dinkins' labor relations was shown by the *New York Times*' last-minute decision to endorse Koch.) A similar situation developed over Local 1199's contract struggle: first expressing sympathy for the workers, Dinkins toned it down after criticism in the press.

Dinkins' conciliationism fits in nicely with the outlook of the labor bureaucrats who don't want confrontations with the bosses. Koch has taken union support and money in the past while spitting at the workers and making it clear he doesn't depend on them. In Dinkins the union leaders found someone who needed them and who therefore they hoped would be more open to negotiation and compromise.

FOR THE WHOLE CITY?

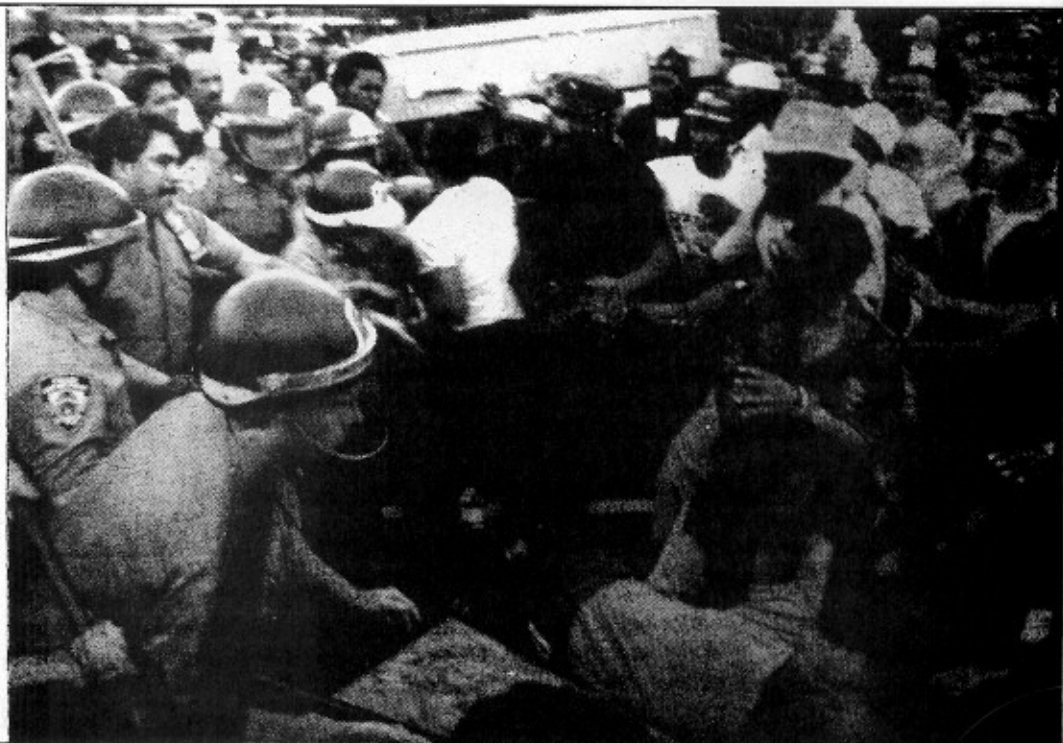
But now that Koch has been slain, Dinkins is the clear front runner. He should win easily against Giuliani and is therefore less in need of labor's backing. While he

still wants union help, Dinkins is reassuring the bosses that he owes the unions nothing. A campaign spokesman hastened to say that Dinkins is "proud of the support he's had from labor [but] all his labor supporters understand that he will do as mayor what's in the interest of the city, on the whole." (*New York Daily News*, October 4.) Translation: he'll be hard on the workers in the interest of *capitalism* on the whole. Koch had lost too much credibility to feed garbage about

to the ranks. The bureaucrats will argue against militancy that might hurt him. Rather than boosting mass action, the short-term effect of a Dinkins victory may be to dampen struggles.

In backing Dinkins, the labor bureaucrats show their readiness to substitute support to Democratic politicians for necessary mass actions to defend the real needs of the workers and oppressed. A worthy response to Bensonhurst, for example, would have been to shut

Brooklyn Bridge:
police rioters club
demonstrators protesting
racist murder of
Yusuf Hawkins.



"equality of sacrifice" to working people and the poor. Because he is black and a proclaimed "healer," Dinkins is suited for the job.

SACRIFICIAL FAIRNESS

After his primary victory, Dinkins picked up substantial support from businessmen. What the bourgeoisie wants was explained by Felix Rohatyn, the financier who designed the "rescue" of New York City in the 1970s that slashed public services and stole workers' pension funds to back the city's debt. This leading thinker and spokesman for the corporate establishment put it precisely:

"On balance, people in the business community think that reduced tension has to be the highest priority, that it's impossible to govern with any requirement for sacrifice unless the people who are going to be asked to sacrifice feel they are being treated fairly. Dave has a lot of personal qualities that lend themselves to that kind of approach."
(*New York Times*, September 26.)

"Suffice it to say that I would be extremely comfortable with David Dinkins as mayor of the city," Rohatyn added. If he's comfortable, working people had better be warned. Leftists like the *Guardian* who celebrate Dinkins' election will have a lot to answer for.

As the bosses understand, Dinkins in office will make it easier for the labor bureaucrats to sell austerity

the city down in a one-day general strike, serving notice on the ruling class and their racist thugs (cops and others) that we will not put up with any more. A real "day of outrage" to shut down New York is the way to forge working-class unity and mobilize the force that can stop race murder.

The crucial importance of mass action in fighting the capitalist assault was demonstrated by the victory won by City University of New York students last spring. It also illustrates the dismal role played by Democratic politicians, David Dinkins in particular. The rescinding of tuition increases and budget cuts, won through sit-ins, strikes and militant demonstrations is now being undercut by Governor Cuomo and his allies.

DINKINS AND THE CITY UNIVERSITY STRUGGLE

Tragically, some of the student leaders who justly condemned Dinkins for refusing to support the mass struggle waged by working-class students, largely black and Latino, have now been enticed into supporting him. A letter by four LRP supporters published (in a shortened version) by *The Campus*, a City College student newspaper, quoted the Students for Educational Rights group summing up the lessons it had learned:

"To David Dinkins, we send this message: you have shown your true colors by refusing to support a cause that should have required no second thought. ... Your intransigence, Mr. Dinkins, will

be remembered. Do not expect wide support from the CUNY colleges. ... It is an abandonment that was acridly endured, as a merciless stab in the heart."

The letter responded to the decision of some SER leaders to form a student committee for Dinkins:

"What has changed your attitude towards Dinkins' since last May? One thing ... you got a promise from him that says: 'As Mayor I will speak out on

society. They have become part of the problem, not the solution. As the letter concluded, "In trying to cover up [Dinkins'] record of betrayal of our struggles, you are doing a great disservice to the students and workers of CUNY."

Interracial working-class struggle is vital. At the same time, black self-organization for self-defense against the brewing storm cannot wait. Racism cannot be successfully fought without a struggle to end the



CUNY students protested Governor Cuomo's betrayal. They need now to open their eyes to Dinkins'.

issues of concern to students and be an advocate for your needs in areas where I do not have direct authority ... I will also oppose further cuts in the CUNY budget.'

"Is that any firmer or less vague than what he said in May? ... He opposes 'further cuts' — but what about the slashes already made? He will speak out for us where he has no authority — thanks, but what will he do where he has power as Mayor? Even if he makes specific promises to 'advocate' this or that, can you believe him? Is he now any less tied to Cuomo, who is set on cutting back CUNY? Didn't Cuomo promise much the same thing when he ran for office? Dinkins' record of non-support shows that his word is no better than Cuomo's.

These students, like the labor bureaucrats and the black and Latino establishment, are sowing illusions in "healing" the race and class divisions of capitalist

capitalist system that nurtures it. The working class desperately needs to reject the bourgeois political parties and organize one that defends *its* interests: a proletarian revolutionary party dedicated to socialism. In this, black working-class leadership is central.

DINKINS IS NO ALTERNATIVE

We join other workers and oppressed people in applauding Koch's defeat. By rejecting Koch, the voters rejected the rampant racism of the past decade. We opposed, however, voting for Dinkins in the primary — and we are against voting for him or any bourgeois candidate in the general election. Dinkins the Democrat represents the reverse of anti-racist consciousness; revolutionaries will have to fight to prevent his inevitable betrayal from sowing demoralization among the masses. The currently misdirected feelings of solidarity must be turned into a powerful revolutionary force that will carry out the transformation of society.■

Labor

continued from page 1

The *Militant*, organ of the Socialist Workers Party, also finds working-class militancy champing at the bit. The Eastern Airlines strike leaps in its pages from one success to another. We read in the September 15 issue, for example, that "signs of both the strike's power and Eastern's vulnerability have lifted the morale of many strikers in recent weeks and inspired new confidence in their ability to move forward." The article adds that on Labor Day the Eastern strikers "got an enthusiastic response from other workers and solidarity ... became the theme of many union contingents."

Would that it were so. Unfortunately, we remember the even more effusive expressions of solidarity for the air controllers' union, PATCO, at the huge Solidarity Day demonstration in Washington in 1981. But all the verbal support by union leaders from Lane Kirkland on down meant one thing: it was OK for Ronald Reagan to crush PATCO; the unions weren't going to *do* anything.

A REALISTIC ASSESSMENT

The enthusiastic coverage of labor militancy and solidarity in the *Militant* and the *PDW* appears to extol the rank and file — but it really signifies endorsement of the policies of various labor leaders. The *Militant* uncritically supports the Winpisinger-Kompas leadership of the machinists' IAM and Richard Trumka of the miners' UMWA. And while the *PDW* is still ambiguous about the AFL-CIO tops, Hall believes that the chief himself has enlisted in labor's new turn. He says, "Lane Kirkland reflected the need for new tactics when he commented, 'As between the present law (the National Labor Relations Act) and no law, I'd prefer no law.'"

Any realistic assessment of the current labor scene must begin with an analysis of the *differences* between the ranks' militancy and their leaders', even where the two seem the same. Trumka, for example, has been at the head of a militant struggle against the Pittston Coal Company since April. He has been willing to accept millions of dollars in fines by the federal government. He went so far as to say:

"We're going to bring people from all over the country into southwestern Virginia to show how labor law has failed, to show how the courts work to hurt workers and how government acts as a tool of the company." (In *These Times*, August 30.)

As for the ranks, there is little doubt of their fury at Pittston's attempt to smash their union. It would be a mistake to dismiss this militancy as nothing new, just because the miners have such a record of past struggle, clearly outdistancing that of other workers. In fact, reports indicate that there is a broad sentiment among Pittston and other union miners for a general strike, not only of miners but of all workers.

(In the past, because of the special conditions and relative strength of the miners, militancy has tended to be mine-worker conscious and not to embrace the whole working class. While their new sense of a wider solidarity is due in large part to the present weakness of their union, which now organizes only a minority of mines,

it cannot be ignored. Union weakness is prevalent throughout labor today; it is a factor inhibiting militancy in the first instance. But given the real underlying power of the working class, as with the miners, it also points to new directions which could help the workers transcend past limitations.)

RANKS' AND LEADERS' DIFFERENT MILITANCY

Ranks and leaders are really far apart on militancy. Despite Trumka's attempt to get AFL-CIO support and his wish for broader mobilizations, his actions fall far behind his words. He makes no move to pressure other union officials to actually mobilize their members for joint strikes. While he allowed occupations of Pittston facilities, he also ordered the strikers to leave at the first sight of an injunction. Many strikers resent the union's curtailment of the sympathy walkouts by 44,000 miners earlier this year. As well, the armed self-defense and even shooting at scabs testifies to miners' dissatisfaction with Trumka's policy of passive resistance. But it must be noted that despite the grumblings and desires for a new course, there is no organized opposition to Trumka reflecting this mood.

There is also militancy among Eastern Airlines workers, but it has been much more limited. Initial threats of IAM picketlines at railroads were eagerly awaited by airline and transport workers. But the IAM, after indicating in advance that it would back down, quickly complied with court edicts and never even put up pickets.

The tremendous anger at Eastern boss Frank Lorenzo has been dissipated by a deliberate policy of avoiding mass picketing. No real effort has been made to shut down other airlines: only an ineffective consumer boycott of Lorenzo's Continental Airlines was attempted.

FRUSTRATED COMBATIVITY

The IAM's strategy is based on winning support in the courts and government. Union tops have been careful to encourage no actions which would jeopardize their legal orientation or provoke "public opinion," i.e., the wrath of the bourgeois press. Consequently the optimism of the airline strikers has degenerated into sullen, frustrated anger. The hope that greeted the Eastern strike when the pilots walked out alongside the machinists — that genuine union solidarity would now reverse the capitalist offensive — has now virtually disappeared, except in the propaganda of some union hacks and the left.

The Communications Workers' strike is another classic example of frustrated militancy. The CWA has signed giveback contracts with phone companies across the country (except, as we write, with NYNEX in New York and New England).

Strikes against the Bell companies are difficult, because of their automated technology and numerous management personnel. The CWA has therefore been vocal in calling for solidarity with other unions. In recent years it has adopted a militant reform image complete with a "Jobs for Justice" campaign; it even hinted at taking action against the conservative Lane Kirkland line. (See "The Battle of Hormel," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 26.)

The CWA co-sponsored a mass rally in Manhattan

*Show of strength:
thousands of striking
workers march on
Montefiore Hospital.
Show of weakness: bu-
reaucrats let scabs in.*



with the striking hospital workers of Local 1199 — but not surprisingly, few phone workers outside of the CWA staff showed up. No attempt was made to mobilize the ranks. We are reminded of our experience with the CWA's left-facing vice president Jan Pierce in 1986. When an LRPer at a Hormel solidarity meeting challenged Pierce as to what he was doing to build a support demonstration, he said, "I'm bringing my son-in-law."

BUREAUCRATS AHEAD OF MEMBERS?

The *People's Daily World* hailed the hospital workers' "militant two- and three-day stoppages" in order to endorse the strategy of Local 1199 under Dennis Rivera — especially since some 1199 leaders are close to the CP. But CPers in the union knew better. The fact is that union leaders resisted an all-out strike for as long as possible, on the grounds that the members didn't want it. While there was some rise in militancy during the mini-strikes, most workers would have joined an all-out strike reluctantly if it had taken place — at least at first. On the other hand, workers would have responded vigorously to a serious strike strategy aimed at keeping out scabs and really shutting down hospital business. (See the following article.)

Local 1199's leaders like to claim that they stand to the left of their membership: the members' conservatism is the problem. But they themselves are responsible: they had no policy that would enable a strike to win. Their electoral and media orientation precludes stopping scabs and fighting other union chiefs for a wider strike, not to mention what is really needed: a general strike against

the concessions demanded by bosses everywhere.

The real problem is that the union bureaucrats see no such alternative, not even one that can win limited strikes. Their hope for a greater combativity that will not really upset bourgeois public opinion puts them in an absurd bind. How did things come to such a pass?

BACKGROUND TO FRUSTRATION

There is a history to the predicament that the unions and their officials find themselves in. In the post-World War II prosperity boom there were huge strikes which won big wage gains and fringe benefits. The cold-war hysteria of the 1940s and '50s was used (by Democrats as well as Republicans) to domesticate the turbulent unions of the period and tighten the grip of conservative bureaucrats.

The bureaucrats, reinforcing their role as brokers of labor power, negotiated gains in exchange for increased state control. Governmental bodies came to have a decisive voice over when unions could strike, the nature of picket lines, setting up cooling-off periods, provision of mediation services, election of union officers, internal procedures — in short, all union activities. The bureaucrats' very positions came to depend on a complex web of federal and state regulations.

The collapse of the prosperity bubble at the end of the 1960s led to a brutal assault by the capitalists against the working class, aimed at taking back past gains. Racism, wartime patriotism and various economic weapons were used to divide and undermine the workers. Fearful of the working class's latent power, the bosses

also turned to union busting — up to a point. It was far better to make use of the pliant union bureaucracy to discipline the working class from within. The full weight of the state and its regulatory agencies was turned to this task.

The attack on wages, health benefits and living standards in general has had considerable success. Counting for inflation, average wages have fallen for two decades. Up to now the unions have caved in one after the other, becoming weaker and weaker, shunning strikes and losing when forced into them — mostly in splendid isolation, each ignoring the plight of the next. The bureaucrats have accepted the logic that concessions

them more than to increased working-class militancy. But the workers' stepped-up combativity is an accelerator. Some bureaucrats do worry about workers getting out of hand in the future — not just through riots (or race wars) but through "unconstructive" industrial struggles that disrespect capitalist profits. By forcing a break with Kirkland & Co., excess militancy could destroy the possibility of "solidarity" as they see it and therefore endanger their existence. Hence the new formulas for limited militancy.

Acknowledging the wide variation in class consciousness that exists among workers, we can still make certain generalizations. There is deep frustration with



Bitter telephone workers picket NYNEX. One worker has already been killed by a scab.

were needed to maintain profits and therefore jobs.

Concessions, however, only breed more concessions. As a result, now not only the workers but the bureaucracy itself is under attack. With unions losing membership, bureaucratic posts are undermined. As well, as capitalism fights to survive its developing crisis, anyone with social insight knows that we face not only economic hardship but also fratricidal racial warfare. The fabric of social stability that protects the bureaucracy is shredding. Even Trumka has this to say: "The major premises under labor law no longer exist. We need something more fundamental than just patching up the system and having it undermined again in five years."

LIMITED MILITANCY

Such considerations have led left bureaucrats to encourage an increased level of industrial struggle. Some have organized support activities for the miners, machinists and other strikers. But they also try to channel the new combativity in an electoralist direction. They hold back because of the failures of isolated strikes. And they are constrained by the web of governmental controls which both ties their hands and holds them in place as labor brokers. The pervasiveness of state regulation leads them not to fight it but to try to make it more amenable to their side. That is why Trumka, Pierce, Rivera and the like all rally around the cause of Jesse Jackson.

These bureaucrats' willingness to fight a bit more than in the past is a reaction to capitalism's attacks on

the unions' eternal givebacks. There is foreboding about the economy, despite the superficial prosperity for the rich and relatively high nominal employment rate. There is a greater appreciation of the need for solidarity and to stand up and fight management.

But the greater combativity is tempered by past failures. Workers see little alternative to their present leaders. In the auto workers' UAW, for example, the oppositional New Directions group is a product of lower union officials, not the ranks. It has awakened members' interest but no noticeable movement of struggle.

We have cited the off-the-record sneering by left bureaucrats about the workers' unwillingness to fight. Given the bureaucrats' no-win strategies, the workers' apparent conservatism is understandable. But that doesn't make it right. The longer they wait, the harder and more dangerous their first all-out struggles will be.

BOILING MASSES?

Once upon a time there were leftists who swore by a treasured recipe for capitalism's last supper: to a pot of Boiling Masses add a tablespoon of Revolutionary Party and stir vigorously. Presto, Instant Revolution. But after spending a heroic moment in the socialist kitchen, the left cooks departed, muttering that "the workers have failed us": they don't boil. That is the history of many of the burnt-out souls who staff the offices of left-wing unions. And their co-thinkers who remain in the political left cheer every low simmer as a sign of boiling in order to tail the bureaucrats.

One reason that the workers can still be misled by this craven left bureaucracy is that the leap they have to make to the next step, as they perceive it, is enormous. Each struggle is met by government restrictions and police power openly arrayed on the bosses' side. Any serious action means breaking with bourgeois legality, disobeying court orders, defying federal agencies, challenging the cops. Steps like these are remote from the consciousness of today — although they are exactly what took place in the 1930s when the unions were built. Workers fear to confront capitalist legality not only because of the obvious penalties but because they grudgingly accept the "rules of the game." This is the ideological residue of years of bureaucratic cohabitation with the bourgeois state.

As well, given the hideousness and collapse of what passes for communism in the East, workers accept capitalism as normal and proper, even as the only possible reality. Defying "reality" without a visible alternative is difficult indeed. But it is the only way out.

PRIVATE PIRACY

Another important ideological factor is the worldwide celebration of "free enterprise." Not only Reagan, Thatcher and Bush but also the one-time welfare-statist liberals proclaim the virtues of the private sector. Social democrats extol the market, and even Stalinist rulers of the East now worship the gods of non-state ownership. No wonder most workers see no alternative to the sanctity of private property.

In this climate the United States government can hand out billions to drug companies while health care rots and new diseases proliferate and spend fortunes on the savings and loan tycoons who filched the savings of millions. It can raise taxes on working people and slash those on capital gains. It subsidizes junk-bond takeovers and robs public services of funds. Private ownership is guarded from criticism and regulation, even when it is nothing but pure piracy.

Fortunately workers' illusions are passing. In the Stalinist states they are learning that private bosses are just as oppressive as the bosses' state. In the U.S. their cautious militancy is challenging the owners right to rule the workplace. Soon we will hear revived calls for nationalization of the mines, hospitals, factories and banks. Naturally, when the sentiment changes, the chameleons of the left will sniff the wind and change color, recognizing that their social position rests on the increased power of the state. They will again sneer at the workers, this time for not believing in the role of the state in the past. And they will surely demand compensation for private owners and full respect for bourgeois law even when they approve nationalizations.


THE REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE

As the left bureaucrats say, political action is the only answer — but not their kind. What is necessary really *is* boiling masses: that is, a massive united action of the working class. Of course, true solidarity and a general strike won't happen in a day. Marxists remember Engels' admonition that impatience is a poor guide to revolution. The true communist method is to steadily work in every possible action of our class — for the understanding that what holds it back is not the work-

ers' weakness but their unawareness of their strength.

The weakness of today's unions conceals the working class's enormous power; it can shut down every factory and city and halt the production of profits. The bureaucrats deny it and workers do not see it, but the capitalists know it. That is why, despite the cowardice of the union officials, there has been no all-out attempt to crush the unions. But the developing crisis will make such an attempt inevitable.

Revolutionaries will gain trust and adherence of their fellow workers by proving our combativity, endurance in struggles and capacity for telling the truth about the system, not just what is popular at the mo-



LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
Room 201, 170 Broadway, New York NY 10038,

I would like to receive further information
about the LRP.

Name _____

Address _____

ment. We call for statification of the means of production but do not hide the fact that under a bourgeois state it will prove no real solution. Workers will have to confront "democratic" bourgeois laws by demanding expropriation without surrendering "compensation" to the privateering profiteers.

Nor do revolutionaries conceal that the necessary actions will abrogate bourgeois law and will face the police power of the bosses' state. But workers face that every day now, in ordinary struggles; and it can only increase, to massive strikebreaking as well as cop massacres and racist brutality. The advantage of a general strike is that it brings *our* side into play at full strength.

To break with the rules of capitalism means also

breaking with the trade union bureaucracy, right and left. Of course, when the workers begin to move some of the left officials and their "socialist" hangers-on, who have insisted on small steps only ("Do Not Boil"), will suddenly try to turn up their own flame and take charge. But their underlying commitment to the everlasting reality of capitalism — and don't forget their niches within it — guarantees that their leadership will prove even more dangerous to workers than it is now.

We have undoubtedly overgeneralized. There are elements in the class far less militant than those we have described in current struggles. There are also many who are even readier to fight, as well as a small number who

have reached revolutionary consciousness, far ahead of the mass of workers.

Revolutionary workers today cannot control the level of struggle. But we must join together to build the leadership vital to the success of the mass explosions that will inevitably — and seemingly suddenly — erupt. A revolutionary party leadership constructed over time, in struggle after struggle, is the decisive ingredient — both in the daily struggles we now face and for the overthrow of the world system of deepening misery. When the working class constructs a party that fights for proletarian interests at every turn, then all things that seem impossible today will be within reach. ■

Hospital Contract No 'Technicolor Dream'

The meeting was called by Local 1199, New York City's major hospital union. It was meant to be a kick-off rally for a strike by 47,000 workers scheduled to begin in a few days against the League of Voluntary Hospitals. Jesse Jackson was among the announced speakers. But the union apparatus had mobilized for the rally in a perfunctory manner, and only a few hundred workers had turned out.

Suddenly the union officials asked the attendees to move down to the front of the room, which they did. The television lights went on. Viewers at home saw a packed house, workers cheering their heads off, thunderously demonstrating their passion to strike. Then the cameras and lights turned off, and so did all the manufactured enthusiasm. The delegates returned to sober contemplation of a strike that many were not at all happy about.

Local 1199 ended its three-month long contract battle with the hospitals on October 4 without the all-out strike. It signed a three-year pact that was hailed by enraptured TV and newspaper reporters as a victory for the union and its young leader, the newly crowned media hero, Dennis Rivera.

"Working Class Slays a Giant," one columnist raved. "Impossible Dream Won in Technicolor," another added. "A strong union and leader emerge," said a third headline. The *New York Times* pronounced Rivera "a star in the national constellation of labor leaders" who had wielded "a sophisticated and unorthodox strategy in the streets and among opinion makers" to bring the hospital bosses to their knees.

ILLUSION AND REALITY

The fuss was over the hospitals' agreement to 7.5 percent raises for two years plus 3 to 3.5 percent increases to the health benefit plan. (Hospital wages average about \$18,000 per year.) In the third year there will be non-compounded 5 percent raise and a \$500 bonus outside of base pay. There are also union giveaways, including a suspension of payments to the workers' pension funds for over 35 months. The overall deal was inferior to the contract reached with the city's Catholic-run hospitals in July — a two-year pact with 8.5 percent wage hikes and lesser givebacks.

Now union and management, antagonists throughout the summer, plan to campaign jointly for government funds to rescue the "stricken" institutions. And

1199's staff can get back to what they see as their real job: getting out the vote for pro-capitalist Democratic politicians — in this case mayoral candidate David Dinkins.

In fact, the union's strategy was not simply to appeal to "public opinion" through the good graces of the bourgeois media: it also relied on the Democrats. This two-pronged plan produced the "victory" which, sadly, is far more illusion than truth. As a union organizer at Presbyterian Hospital said, urging members to ratify the new contract, "Sometimes the perception is more important than the reality."

RECOVERY FROM DISASTER

We summarize the long pre-contract activity to show why the "impossible dream" contract, while no smashing defeat for the workers, was not the success it has been made out to be.

Last March, 1199 organized a demonstration of thousands of workers in Albany to fight New York state's Democratic governor Mario Cuomo's proposed health-care cuts. There were also militant actions at workplaces and a series of overwhelming union votes approving the one-day strikes proposed by the leadership. This already signaled to the bosses that hospital workers were on the road to recovery from their disastrous seven-week strike in 1984 and disunity under a divided and squabbling leadership. (See *Proletarian Revolution* Nos. 22 and 23 for detailed analyses.)

As a result, the Catholic archdiocese agreed to an early settlement, breaking the hospitals' united front. While this contract was marginally better than anything New York workers had seen in recent years, it did not halt the concessionary trend of the past decade. Dennis Rivera stated that "we are determined" that the League would have to yield at least as much; 1199 would not retreat on this. But in reality he saw the Catholic contract as a ceiling, not a floor, as the outcome showed.

MINI-STRIKE SUMMER

On two mid-July days, tens of thousands of hospital workers on one-day strikes filled Manhattan streets. They surrounded St. Luke's and Mt. Sinai Hospitals — but made no effort to keep out scabs who kept operations going. The limited strikes were really called to build rallies for Dinkins and Jackson rather than the other way round. A head-on confrontation would have

undermined the union's public relations campaign to win the hearts and minds of the bourgeoisie. As an LRP leaflet commented,

"Those who expected real strike action must have been surprised to learn what Jerry Hudson, executive vice president of 1199, told the *New York Times*: that 'we just wanted to demonstrate our power, not cripple the health-care system.' No, we wanted to cripple management's profit-making system, and we resent the implication — from our union leaders as well as the bosses — that it's the workers' fault when we're forced to strike in order to demand decent health-care conditions."

Union leaders knew that without a stronger posture than they had presented in the past, the still wounded union would be defeated. Major hospitals in the League wanted to take the opportunity to crush 1199. Rivera had to talk tough about shutting down a hospital in the early summer. But as soon as a court injunction came down, he caved in and agreed to play by capitalism's rules.

FIGHTING A LA KING

Then the union issued press releases reminding the public that Martin Luther King Jr. had anointed it "the conscience of the labor movement." Accordingly, Rivera threatened civil disobedience. This also meant tangling with the law, but in a hallowed and "respectable" way so that the media would approve. It meant *not* using the strength of tens of thousands of workers to show the bosses that workers mean business.

The constant excuse from 1199 headquarters was that members were not eager for an all-out strike. They had been badly beaten last time, because of the previous leadership's craven tactics that allowed scabs to enter and run the hospitals. Rivera and his allies reinforced workers' fears by running for office on a no-more-foolishness, anti-strike program. It is the bureaucracy which was and still is responsible for the once highly militant ranks' reluctance to strike. For in their experience, all-out strikes lose.

STOP THE SCABS!

The next month a three-day mini-strike included a march around Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx, again with no effort to shut it down. At a subsequent well-attended citywide 1199 delegates' meeting, a speaker from Montefiore complained that while the rally had raised the hopes of Montefiore's workers, by the next day they were all demoralized. Another delegate, a well-known supporter of the LRP, took the floor to point out that if the thousands of demonstrators had actually shut down the hospital and stopped the scab brigade from going in, the workers would have felt differently. Hearing a different strike strategy, the members attending gave her loud applause, far more than any Rivera got at that session. But to no avail: his strategy was set.

As the September 12 Democratic primary neared, union strategy shifted. Organizers were diverted to the

Dinkins campaign while demoralization in the workplaces accelerated. After Dinkins won, however, the union was strategically trapped. Continuing to work without a contract would wipe out the health benefit fund and postpone the strike to the cold of winter. But striking before Election Day would force Dinkins to reaffirm his support during an actual struggle — or to openly betray the largely black and Latino workers he had pledged himself to.



Capitalism is catastrophic for workers' health. The avalanche of labor givebacks must be stopped now!

Either choice would have hurt Dinkins' "healing" campaign. He would face an inevitable "captive of labor" assault by the media, on the one hand, or else damage his ability to deliver minorities and labor into the bosses electoral trap, on the other.

"We put 2000 people on the street in the week of the primary to help build up the Dinkins vote," said vice-president Hudson. "We don't want to do anything to hurt him." (*New York Observer*, October 9.)

POLITICS OF THE PACT

The solution was to call for an "all-out" strike starting October 4 — and hope not to have to carry it out. The bosses' position was weakening, so they got their deal. The National Labor Relations Board had just acknowledged blatant management violations and denied the hospitals permission to hire new "replacement workers" (non-1199 scabs). As well, the massive mini-strikes had jarred the hospitals. And now workers at blood donation centers were also prepared to strike, and this could have proved crippling.

The union officials were also able to make use of their leverage in the Dinkins campaign to divide the bosses, settling with some hospitals (including Pres-

byterian) in advance and thereby putting pressure on the hard-line union-busting holdouts. Does that mean that the Democratic Party political strategy has paid off? For the leadership, yes. But not for the members.

At the time of the Catholic settlement, the state government (which subsidizes all hospitals in New York) announced that it was satisfied with the deal. Then, as the League dug in its heels and refused to make a contract offer, Cuomo and his aides took a tougher line on how much the state would help. But when the deadline neared and Dinkins was endangered, the Democrats came through. Officials gave the union information about which hospitals were in financial straits and might break the bosses' unity.

The real sweetener that induced a settlement was union givebacks. The state already reimburses labor costs, although by how much is kept hidden from the public and the workers. Certainly, below the public relations surface, pressure on the state for more money to defray the new costs is reduced by the concessions.

THE TAINTED CONTRACT

LRP supporters have been in 1199 for many years, active on strikes, layoff struggles and other actions; we have always put forward our revolutionary perspective. This year, when the League contract was announced, we urged a vote against it in opposition to the universal propaganda touting it as a tremendous victory.

The "victory contract," despite superficial appearances, represents a significant retreat from the Catholic contract, which was narrowly supportable and served as a tactical measure to divide the bosses. It was a decided setback compared to what hospital workers need, especially after the losses of previous contract rounds. Full details were not available to members at ratification time — standard bureaucratic procedure for even the most "progressive" unions. But the partial information available was enough to call for a No vote.

1) The pension fund giveback was justified on the grounds that the fund had a surplus. But that's only because many retirees get abysmal payments, some still as low as \$100 a month even after a recommended raise. It is workers' money that was lost, nobody's "surplus."

2) Taking into account the major monetary terms — wage and benefit increases against pension-fund cutbacks — the pact yields an average gain of 6.0 percent a year (5.5 percent to base pay) as compared to the Catholics' 6.6 percent. But even this is misleading. The third year is not covered in the Catholic contract and will be negotiated then based on management once again making full payments to the pension fund. While for League workers, fund contributions will resume only after three years — and then at a lower rate. As well, the "5 percent" third-year pay increase is really only 4.3 percent more than the second-year wage.

3) The three-year as opposed to two-year contract divides the union and reduces the chance of a united hospital struggle. Along with deepened two-tier wage rates for new hires, this sets up future defeats. After the Catholic pact, Rivera promised to make a common expiration date a top priority. Typically he quickly forgot his own words.

4) The union's collusion with management and bourgeois politicians, always significantly present, will

be heavily increased under the new contract. Union and bosses will go to Albany hand-in-hand to plead for aid. When the state does fork over new money, the "generous" contract will make it look like a gift to workers, not to management. The hospital's financial crisis is real — but not because of pay increases.

There will be a price to pay. "You find a way to find increased efficiencies so that you can pay your share of the settlement," a high state official told the hospitals. Every experienced worker knows what that means: layoffs, speed-up, austerity — after Dinkins is off the election hook, of course. Kenneth Raske, president of the Greater New York Hospital Association, announced that "many" hospitals are preparing budgets that include further cutbacks if state aid is not raised.

That's what the contract *really* means, whatever the final figures say. It is a pact between Rivera and elements of management, co-signed in effect by the Democrats, to maintain the hospital industry at the workers' expense — and, for the moment at least, to enlist workers in the deal. Once the electoral honeymoon is over, the gloves will be off.

What the union gained was to beat back those bosses who wanted to totally humble 1199. As well, 1199ers and other workers now feel they have won something. This is important, especially since the management coalition has been strained. But this factor does not outweigh the demoralizing and defeatist consequences of the givebacks and electoral trap, which will become increasingly apparent.

WHO'S NOT TELLING THE TRUTH?

Running through the whole contract struggle was a conscious effort by union leaders to bamboozle their own workers. Take the union's mid-summer newspaper ad headlined "Why Don't the Bosses Tell the Truth for Once?" Here 1199 said:

"The Catholic hospitals were honest with us. They knew they could afford to pay us 8.5% wage increases per year. Because they have the money — just like the League hospitals do."

But the only reason the Catholic bosses could pay is that the union handed them back millions in the pension postponement for two years. And then it gave the League a better deal for *three*. If the hospitals could afford to pay, why hand them \$50 million more out of retirees' pockets? And why join them in lobbying the state for money they supposedly don't need?

The question workers should be asking is: why don't the *union leaders* tell the truth for once? The answer is that their job is to fool the workers into thinking that capitalism, and its politicians, are all they have to rely on — not their own struggles.

Proof of the bureaucrats' contempt for the members comes from their actions as well as their words. The non-compounding and non-base pay bonus in the third year are deliberately designed to fool workers. The next contract will be negotiated from a lower base-pay level than they are led to believe. As opposed to the media-minded leaders' preference for illusion over reality, for us, the workers' understanding of their real position is the most important factor enabling them to fight to better it.

The final point is political. The workers' willingness

to fight the bosses was detoured by the leadership into dead-end electoralism that fights for the bosses' politicians. This contract is a clear embodiment of such a strategy. When the bosses were caving in, a strike could have won a contract at least equivalent to the Catholics'. But that would have meant embarrassing Dinkins, so the chance of winning more was abandoned.

ELECTORALIST ILLUSIONS

All New York workers will lose out from the bureaucrats' pro-capitalist electoralism. The 1199 contract will be used to divide not just hospital workers but all public service workers in the city.

The city's politicians and pundits insisted after the 1199 settlement that municipal workers could not expect a similar deal. This was the line of both Democratic mayor Koch and Republican candidate Giuliani. Front-running candidate Dinkins kept a discreet silence, but his ally, former DC 37 head Victor Gotbaum (expected to get a high post in City Hall), agreed with the consensus: "You can't give away what you haven't got."

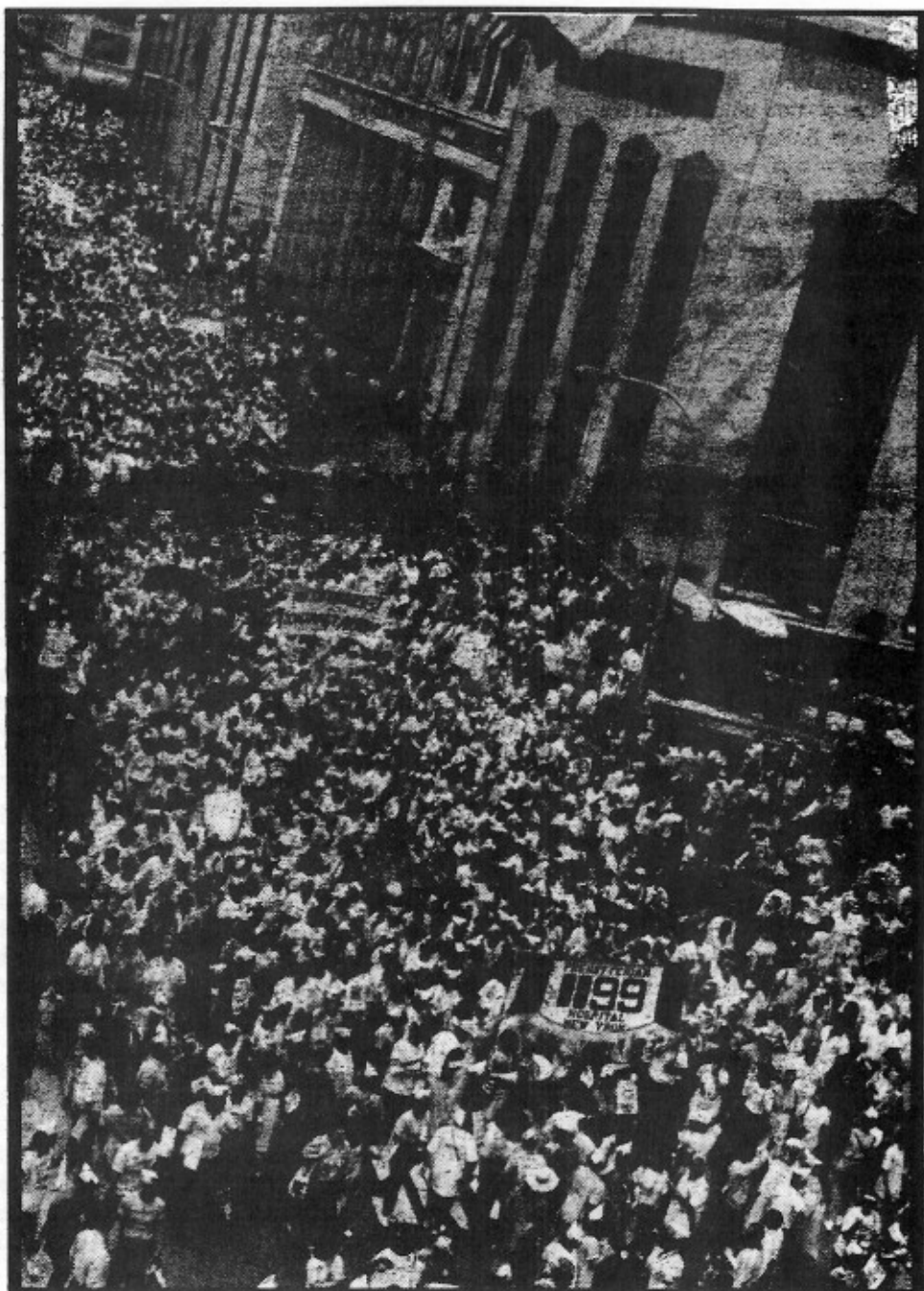
The city has no money, they all say. Yet somehow Koch perennially gave big tax write-offs to real estate and financial interests. The working class gets no such breaks, even from its "friends" and ex-leaders who help run the bosses' government.

THE STRIKE THAT'S NEEDED

We did not oppose this contract lightly. A No vote is a declaration that a new strategy is needed. Now that workers are beginning to see that they do not always have to bow down to profit-hungry bosses, it is vital to take a stand against concessions. In the hospitals, a genuine strike to shut off the profits of these "non-profit" institutions and win real gains is the only way forward.

This means ending the unions' reliance on the Democrats and the bourgeois media. In the deepening crisis that capitalism is providing, telling the bosses that workers are the nicest people ever will not even win crumbs. Rivera and other "progressive" union officials are interested in "gains" that entrench their bureaucratic positions and raise their status in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. They will mobilize workers for the cameras, not for the class struggle.

As we have always explained to 1199 workers, to win the union must have the solidarity in action of the entire working class — the majority of society and its real productive force. Isolated strikes, even militant ones, are not enough. As we stated in a leaflet prepared



for the "all-out strike" that never came:

"We need far more than lip service from other union leaders about how they support us — 1199 should immediately call on the New York City Central Labor Council for a one-day general strike to stop concessions and to support the 1199 strike, as well as other strikes that are currently under way. Even a one-day general strike would have a far-reaching impact, and would serve the ruling class notice that we are no longer playing by their rules."

The way forward is for workers to unite in battle, to reject the tactic of isolated, limited strikes, and to unleash the strength of a mobilized working class in a General Strike Against Concessions to beat back the bosses' attacks. Such a struggle will prove as well that the working class has the capacity to take state power and run society in the interests of all. ■

Drug War

continued from page 2

its budget and pay off its debt; the only way the newly unemployed can make a living is to grow coca. Likewise, U.S. subsidies to corporate farms growing for export have undermined Latin American small farmers, driving them as well into the coca trade.

DRUGS AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

On top of this, the U.S. government itself is a notorious pusher all over the world. It dealt drugs in China in the 1940s, in Indochina in the 1960s and throughout the Americas in the 1980s — through the CIA's old pal Noriega and the U.S.-created and funded Nicaraguan contras.

At home, transport and other bosses have cut back on their workforces, making fewer people work harder and serious accidents inevitable. Then they insist on drug testing for workers — blaming the victims for the unsafe conditions they've imposed. A self-righteous crusade is being whipped up to extend mandatory drug testing to other workers as a way of further weakening union rights and class struggles.

One of the main dangers of the "war on drugs" is the direct intervention of the U.S. military abroad. Starting with some "trainers" in Bolivia, then in Peru and now Colombia, U.S. imperialism is building towards the kind of semi-occupation of South America that already exists in Honduras and Panama. The region is in near-revolutionary turmoil, for good reason, and the national bourgeois regimes have proved incapable of stopping it. As in Central America, U.S. forces will soon be taking part in counterrevolutionary colonial wars, directly or indirectly.

In Colombia the U.S. is now coming down hard on the drug capitalists who are killing members of the established bourgeoisie. But these bosses are no angels either: their families acquired wealth by even rougher methods. In the 1940s and 1950s some 200,000 workers were killed, mostly by gunmen of the Conservative Party, one faction of the current rulers.

Imperialism

continued from page 2

with a serenade of delicately qualified alleged support for self-determination in the Soviet Baltic republics:

"Should there be self-determination? Should there be freedom? Yes — but it should not take place in the context of major instability, bloodshed and that sort of thing. That's our policy.

"I think there is a way to speak to that without, at the same time, inciting rebellion and without, at the same time, creating instability which could have a significant adverse result, in terms of our relationship with the countries of Eastern Europe and, for that matter, our relationship with the Soviet Union." (Times, September 28.)

Today the "Medellin cartel" is interpenetrated with the same reactionary bourgeoisie, through bribery and the shared interests of property owners. Joint death squads of the cartel and military have already massacred hundreds of workers, peasants and leftists for every establishment politician killed. The cartel will likely reach an accommodation with the U.S. "drug fighters" against the deeper threat of social revolution.

The "war against drugs" serves a need for capital: it is designed to bind frightened middle-class and working people to the capitalists, now that the cold war is ebbing. The enemy is real but the crusade is a lie. Upping the risks of doing business merely accelerates domination by the bigger bosses: those who can afford to buy off armies and cops. Then the higher profits in the drug trade attract more poor working-class youth as the economic crisis deepens for the masses. Bush's war will have the effect of boosting this growth industry.

THE REAL SOLUTION

Working people in this country should stand against any U.S. military extension in the name of the "drug war." We must also oppose workplace drug testing and the linked cutbacks in social programs as anti-union and anti-worker measures. We also fight for free treatment for anyone who wants it.

The terror from drug dealers must be ended, but hiring more police will only add to the forces of corruption and racist murder. A necessary but insufficient step is to legalize drugs: it's *because* drugs are illegal that users steal and pushers kill over them.

But legalization is often pushed by those who are insensitive to the human havoc drugs wreak, especially when it is concentrated among blacks. Under capitalism even a legal drug trade would grow, if more slowly: capitalism itself is the cause of misery. Opiates become the religion of masses when life becomes a nightmare.

The only answer is a new world where farms produce for human benefit, not profit; where exploitation and racial oppression are ended; where human community exists; where creativity and self-worth are encouraged, not degraded. That means the destruction of class society — the creation of communism.■

On a related point, another article in a top bourgeois paper suggested that "an easing of cold war tensions will work against Japan by making the Western world less tolerant of Japanese economic expansion." (*International Herald Tribune*, September 16.)

THE DANGER OF MASS UNREST

The idea that U.S. imperialism seeks world stability and domination by whatever means necessary, not just the traditional cold war, should come as no surprise to Marxists. But for most it does. For a little perspective, we recall some articles of our own.

As far back as 1977, we pointed to the U.S. interest in *reforming* the Stalinist bloc. We cited the Carter administration's support for Soviet dissidents as evidence that it was promoting *less*, not greater instability; we quoted bourgeois spokesmen who wanted to help "prepare them down the road to deal with a massive

generation of dissent" and to "promote a more pluralistic Communism." (*Socialist Voice* No. 4.)

In contrast, other leftists insisted that Stalinism was either socially progressive (a myth that Gorbachev, Deng & Co. are amply disproving) or a new-class rival to Western capitalism. While the rest of the left saw nothing but stark conflict in the Soviet-American relationship, our uncompromising capitalist analysis of the East allowed us to recognize the class solidarity between Eastern and Western rulers in the face of mass unrest. (On this, see also "Solidarity and the Left," page 6.) We knew when Carter was to be believed.

Further, in "Marxist Response to Reaganism" (No. 13, 1981), we observed that Reagan's heightened cold war policy inevitably sounded hollow, because of the Soviets' increasingly obvious economic feebleness.

"The threat of war between the U.S. and the USSR in the near future is real, but it is considerably overblown by Washington's need to rattle its sabers. The new cold war stance of the U.S. (begun not by Reagan but by Carter in January 1980) is designed to pressure its imperialist allies to weaken their 'detente' line and integrate themselves further into the American-led bloc."

We noted that the reason for the U.S. rulers' concern was not just Soviet weakness but their own. The post-World War II boom was over, replaced by a debt-ridden expansion of fictitious capital. In "Reagan's Russian Dilemma" (No. 15, Winter 1982), we added that the powerful economies which lacked the U.S.'s military burden were the real competitors for world hegemony:

"Russia simply does not pose the constant threat that Reagan imagines and requires for his policy to work. ... Even though the USSR is Washington's chief rival today ..., over time Japan or Germany is still the most serious rival."

The shift we foresaw is now becoming reality. And the reason it is still so troubling to the bourgeoisie is that the working masses have begun to rise around the world. With the old order disintegrating — and with Stalinism no longer a reliable brake on revolutionary upheavals — the U.S. was losing its hold over its allies,

not to mention the rest of the globe.

That is the Bush administration's underlying concern as well. There are crises everywhere and mass struggles not only in the Soviet bloc but in Palestine, South Africa and Latin America. Hence the worry that if the cold war is over there will be nothing to replace it with.

For communists the times we live in are encouraging. The capitalist world, East and West, is unstable. Imperialism's hold is weakening. The time is ripe for the world's workers to create their own alternative and not wait for the rulers to find ways to tighten theirs. ■

Iranian Leftists Killed

Three exiled Iranian leftists have been killed in recent months, evidently by agents of the fascistic Islamic Republic.

On July 13, the secretary general of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, A.B. Ghassemlou, was assassinated with two colleagues in Vienna, Austria, during a meeting with representatives of the Iranian government.

On August 26, Gholam Keshavarz (known as Bahman Javadi), a Central Committee member of the far-left Communist Party of Iran (CPI), was shot down in Cyprus on a visit from his home in Sweden. A few days later, Sadigh Kamanger of the Kurdish group Komala (which is linked to the CPI) was assassinated in Iraq.

The barbaric regime founded by Khomeini has murdered thousands of oppositionists and political prisoners in its ten years of state power. It is now targeting opponents in exile.

The League for the Revolutionary Party joins with supporters of the CPI in demanding that the governments of the countries in which assassinations have taken place investigate these crimes, inform the public of the facts and prosecute the killers. ■



Subscribe Now!

Instead subscribe to *Proletarian Revolution* — the Magazine that Workers Do Deserve!

Proletarian Revolution

- \$7.00 for eight issues **Begin with issue No. . . .**
- \$15.00 for institutions, overseas mail and supporting subscriptions.

Name

Address

Zip

Pay to *Socialist Voice*. Send to: *Socialist Voice*, 170 Broadway, Room 201, New York, NY 10038, USA.

Abortion

continued from page 32

which puts profits and prejudice ahead of women's health. Worldwide spending on contraceptive research has fallen by a quarter in the past 15 years; in the U.S. access is forbidden to the new abortifacient drug RU 486. In all cases it is the same system which compels abortion that blames its victims as "murderers."

"PRO-CHOICE" VS. "PRO-LIFE"

There is a growing perception that these attacks on the right to abortion are part of a war against women in this country. As the capitalist crisis deepens, it will no longer just be a question of a system which restricts abortion rights and condones the anti-woman abuses of the right-to-lifers. Capitalism as a whole will be forced to adopt the right-wing program.

Because of the need to deepen divisions within the working class, women and minorities will be increasingly scapegoated. It will become crucial for the system to pretend that most women who work rather than staying home are selfish and neglectful of their "womanly" role. It will assert that most if not all abortions are acts of whim, not necessity. As the growing capitalist crisis increases unemployment, the ideology that says "a woman's place is in the home" will be propagated as a

materially different social positions within society. In the past decade, the typical pro-choice activist has been a professional career woman with obvious needs to limit family size. In contrast, pro-life women come mainly from a lower section of the middle class. They hope that their security and their children's can be enhanced by more government encouragement for the family and the mother's role. Such economically dependent women are inevitably a conservative socializing factor.

The combative right wing knows that victory is achieved through confrontation. Its further development can only be prevented by an opposition which is able to win masses to its side in time. The distraught housewife cannot be won to a liberal program that makes "individual choice" its rallying cry. The woman who has been told for years that bearing children is her role has no way of exercising real choice about her life.

Even less does the working-class woman believe that policies should be based on "individual choice." The working class wants a society that supports its social needs, not one that denies all obligations. After all, the same rhetoric is used to undercut child care programs and other basic needs. It also justifies allowing cops to protect union-busting scabs and the "private" propagation of racist policies.

The big turnout in Washington in April showed that masses of women can be mobilized to fight once again. But if the pro-capitalist politics of NOW, NARAL, Planned Parenthood and the like are allowed to domi-



NOW says that women having too many children is cause of poverty.

partial disguise for the real cause.

As well, to delight in "majority support" for abortion rights and dismiss Operation Rescue (O.R., the right-wing anti-woman group) as fringe elements is to spread a dangerous illusion. While the far right's growing numbers are still relatively small, they include dedicated activists. In a polarizing society they have the potential of attracting masses to their ranks through demagogic manipulation. Many petty-bourgeois and working-class housewives are frightened by male abandonment of the family. Falling real wages mean that male workers are less able to provide for their families. And a skyrocketing divorce rate impoverishes women and children in startling numbers.

The conflict between "pro-choice" and "pro-life" reflects not different abstract moral positions but

nate, building an effective resistance will be tragically impeded. Everything we have gained in the past has been won through mass action, not reliance on a legalistic strategy like NOW's.

To call the April 9 demonstration long overdue is an understatement. Where were the middle-class leaders in 1976 when Jimmy ("ERA") Carter supported the Hyde Amendment, removing Medicaid funding for abortions for poor women? Or in 1980, when in *Harris vs. McRae* the Court ruled that neither the federal government nor the states had to pay for medically unnecessary abortions for women on welfare? The *McRae* ruling was a precedent for the *Webster* decision. And *before Webster*, in 29 states Medicaid funding for abortion was denied even in cases of rape, incest and serious threat to the woman's health. The mainstream organizations' silence

over attacks on the most oppressed women laid the basis for the broader attack today.

Socialists have always advocated free abortion on demand because only this guarantees abortion rights for all women. It is no surprise that NOW and NARAL didn't attack Carter for his opposition to government-funded abortions. He was also zealously ready to fund and advocate sterilization, a policy these "feminists" agreed with.

KEEPING THE POPULATION DOWN

Sterilization is still the number-one method of birth control for women over twenty-five in this country. Its racist nature has been long exposed: women on Medicaid are encouraged to get free sterilization procedures. In sharp contrast to dwindling abortion rights, 90 percent of sterilizations in the U.S. are federally funded.

Opposition to forced sterilization and support for free contraception are vital. But they will never be championed by NOW, which prefers population control (i.e., control of poor people and countries) as a strategy for winning abortion rights. President Molly Yard said, "The abortion question is not just about women's rights but about life on the planet — environmental catastrophe awaits the world if the population continues to grow at its present rate." Even though delegates at the NOW convention rejected a motion for outreach to population control groups, the leadership still stresses this strategy. Their publicity tour this past summer in New Jersey, for example, highlighted a film showing horrific images of starving third-world children — as an argument for abortion, not social liberation.

Alexander Cockburn points out that NOW and its allies have been advocating population control for years:

"Indeed, the not-so-concealed theme of some major figures in NARAL and NOW was that abortion should be legal because the most prolific breeders were welfare mothers from the dangerous classes. ...

"The founding chairman of NARAL was Lawrence Lader, who was also on the board of NOW and of the Association for Voluntary Sterilization. He is the author of *Breeding Ourselves to Death* and has written, 'One third of all children on welfare today come from neglected homes, ignored and unwanted by either parent. ... Above all, society must grasp the grim relationship between unwanted children and the violent rebellion of minority groups.'

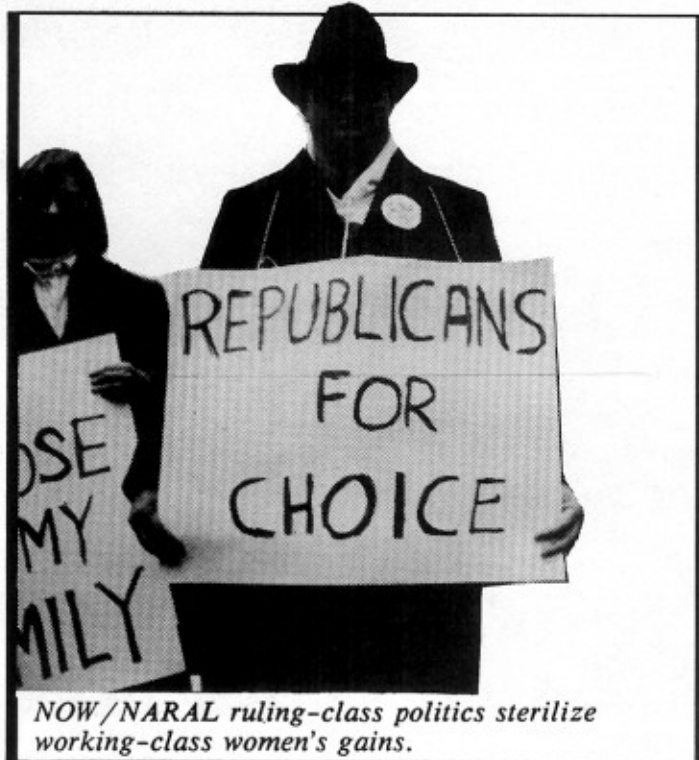
"The leader of NARAL in New York lobbied against the provisions to protect poor minority women from involuntary sterilization, and so did Planned Parenthood. ... The whole history of liberalism over the last 15 years is told in this story." (In *These Times*, August 2.)

If population is presented as the most pressing problem it will be used to divert attention from the underlying causes of mass starvation, war and racism. Capitalism runs for profit, not useful production: from third-world farms the international market demands cash crops, not food; the U.S. continues to reduce food production in the face of worldwide undernourishment. The narrow focus of Yard & Co. avoids reality and gives reactionary politics a liberal cover.

The liberals' policies result from their desire to

retain respectability and avoid shaking the status quo. This has led NOW to become the policewomen of the movement, working overtime actually to prevent militant defense actions against Operation Rescue at clinics across the country. In Oakland and Detroit, NOW made participants sign pledges not to use force against O.R. (*Workers' Advocate*, June 1989.) At a Los Angeles action in April, NOW led a chant of "Boys in Blue, We Love You" — when the cops finally arrested O.R. members after allowing them to disrupt the clinic for hours. In an incident witnessed by LRP participants on April 9, demonstrators tried to confront a small number of anti-abortionists who had entered our march with their usual bloody pictures and reactionary slogans. Marshals from NOW forcibly pushed the demonstrators away.

NOW and friends prefer to use court injunctions



and cops against Operation Rescue. They have even supported the RICO law, as in a recent suit by the Northeast Women's Center in Philadelphia. RICO is supposedly an anti-racketeering law, but its real aim is to bypass constitutional rights to privacy and other civil liberties; it has been used increasingly against unions and workers. Endorsing it as a weapon for fighting the anti-abortionists sets a dangerous precedent which will undoubtedly backfire and be used against the women's movement as well. Capitalist laws fundamentally serve the ruling class, not the oppressed, a fact that the women's movement has to learn.

Despite NOW's treacherous strategy, there have been significant victories against Operation Rescue. This shows that numbers of women want to defy NOW's non-confrontational dictum. Many women who believe in direct action to fight the right have been attracted to local "pro-choice" coalitions.

But the unwillingness of groups like the New York Pro-Choice Coalition and much of the left to openly criticize NOW's leadership is a serious problem. As long

as NOW is allowed to parade as the heavyweight champion of women, it will continue to attract flocks of new young supporters — who will then become disillusioned with its dead-end strategy. The movement died in the 1970s because the same leaderships insisted that a legalistic campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment was the only way forward.

BEHIND NOW'S 'THIRD PARTY'

In this regard it is notable that at NOW's annual meeting last July, Molly Yard and former president Eleanor Smeal mouthed vague support for a "third party" which would defend women's rights. Yard said that many NOW members "don't want to fool around with the parties anymore. They're fed up."

But NOW is not serious about a third party; it redoubled support for "lesser evil" Democrats in innumerable campaigns across the country immediately after the convention. Their third-party rhetoric undoubtedly reflects the discontent of frustrated activists who were told to work for candidates solely because of their stand on abortion — while some had positions only



Spring 1988: Cops remove abortion rights activists from clinic so that Operation Rescue can block it.

marginally better than their opponents'. The NOW leaders will never break with the Democrats, but they are ready to use radical rhetoric in order to hold on to activist support.

Through mass action it is still possible to win reforms, legal changes included, that will benefit women. But today the chance of winning even minimal gains like the right to abortion is far less than in the past.

The direction of society since *Roe vs. Wade* has shown that even progressive sounding rulings and reforms have benefited only small numbers. The wage gap between male and female workers, the fact that women workers remain in unskilled job ghettos, and the lack of day care facilities — all these remain.

We have noted that "pro-choice" politics do not as a rule galvanize working-class women into action. They also fail to serve the constituency they are aimed at. Middle-class women are indeed oppressed under capitalism. While some have made it into the middle rungs of career ladders, few are ever allowed to reach the top.

Even in the best of times, capitalism opposed the non-threatening struggles for affirmative action and the ERA. The great opportunities are simply not out there for the bulk of even educated young women, and they are rapidly shrinking.

Our need is not just to substitute a more radical leadership for NOW. Even mass action in itself is not a solution. If mass struggle today is to have any lasting significance, its purpose must be to raise the consciousness of the masses of working people for a revolutionary strategy and leadership.

Marxists believe that capitalism is the root of women's oppression and that a socialist revolution is necessary to create the basis for women's liberation. Our emphasis on the centrality of the working-class woman and the workers' struggle is based on the understanding that the working class is the central force necessary to combat the capitalist attacks and lead the way forward to socialist revolution.

Mass actions which are limited to demonstrations are the only type that NOW can propose. These demonstrations are important but they clearly do not mobilize the tremendous power that the working class can wield through its location at the centers of profit-making production. As the U.S. polarizes, many workers are resisting the capitalist attacks. More will begin to realize their class power. Working women, who have been out front in strikes in the airlines industry and elsewhere in recent years, will undoubtedly shape battles to come. Many middle-class women are also beginning to shed illusions and will add to the struggle.

GENUINE SOCIALISM = GENUINE LIBERATION

Feminists have pointed to the failure of this or that "socialist" country to provide women's liberation. On the one hand they are absolutely right. These countries, from the Soviet Union to Cuba to China, are extremely oppressive to women.

They do not represent genuine socialism but rather a deformed form of capitalism. The early Soviet workers' state, backward though it was, not only legalized abortion but through many other acts did more to advance the cause of women's liberation than all the capitalist-bound reform struggles for women's rights combined. These advances were destroyed by the counterrevolution. Nevertheless, the original communist program to free women from the chains of the family and capitalist oppression remains the way that women's liberation can actually be achieved. All other roads lead back to capitalist misery.

When masses of young women joined the women's movement in the '60s and '70s, they believed they were fighting, not just for abortion or some other law, but for a liberated world that would enable the development of human potential for all women. Reformist leaderships turned this original vision into the "practical" politics of supporting Democrats and fighting for one law at a time; they killed that movement in the process.

Today, not NOW but the capitalist attacks themselves are reviving a movement — under the much harsher conditions of world capitalist crisis. A revolutionary leadership and a mass revolutionary party, which advances the genuine socialist goals for women and all working people must be built this time.■

Nicaragua

continued from page 32

though on a reduced scale. In place of the workers' and peasants' militias there is the People's Sandinista Army, a conventional conscript force with a serious draft-dodging problem.

Like the other Latin American countries, both "progressive" and reactionary, the Nicaraguan government has dealt with the region's long economic depression through hyperinflation and austerity — devastating economic attacks on the masses. And the U.S. not only has not fled but is more firmly entrenched than ever.

In El Salvador the revolution is in retreat before the most nearly fascist regime in Central American history, fully bankrolled and armed by the United States. Honduras, just north of the border, continues to harbor the contras; since the mid-1980s, U.S. troops have been stationed there to back a military-dominated, death-squad government. Now the *Yanqui* troops are moving into countries where they never have been before — Colombia, Peru, Bolivia — under the cover of the "drug war."

U.S. DOMINATION CONTINUES

While the U.S. dominates Honduras and El Salvador outright, it dominates the policy of the ruling Sandinistas in Nicaragua at one or two removes. Through the series of regional meetings animated by the (somewhat recalcitrant) puppet president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, the Central American states have ganged up on Nicaragua to prescribe how the country can defend itself, who counts as a legitimate internal opposition force, how long jail terms for contra criminals may be.

After each such meeting, the U.S. wails that the concessions wrung from the Sandinista Front (FSLN) don't go far enough, and that the Sandinistas aren't sincere about them anyway. The U.S. also makes credible threats of renewed military action at every juncture. Then the FSLN makes further concessions, either unilaterally or at another regional meeting.

The liberal wing of American imperialism is confident that this set-up is all they need to wipe away the remaining gains of the Nicaraguan revolution. The Bush administration is reluctantly shelving, for the moment, its more blatant attempts to run Nicaragua from afar.

'FREE' ELECTIONS AND FREED CONTRAS

Even though Washington will now not openly fund the presidential campaign of Violetta Barrios de Chamorro, its hand-picked candidate, it has forced the Sandinistas to grant immense favors to her United Nicaraguan Opposition, consisting of twelve bourgeois parties and two pro-Moscow Stalinist groups. The UNO is allowed to receive unlimited campaign contributions from abroad, was granted free prime-time television slots for three months, gets paid expenses for its poll watchers and dominates various election committees.

Of course, if the opposition doesn't win despite these advantages, the U.S. can always claim that the election was rigged — as they did after the last one, which was far more democratic than elections anywhere in the Americas, including the U.S. That would be an excuse for a renewed contra war — or for a deal that

gives the opposition top posts in the government to guarantee bourgeois interests.

Further, the Sandinistas have pledged to suspend military recruitment for six months before the February 1990 vote and guaranteed that there will be no expropriations of property "for purely political reasons." So if the capitalists and landlords want to lay off their workers or send what's left of their working capital to Miami, they'll have ample opportunity to do so.

The Sandinistas also promised that the contras would not only be allowed to return to Nicaragua but that they would be given money, land and tools in the bargain — while peasants and workers who have lost limbs, family and property fighting these butchers get



U.S. imperialism's program for Nicaragua: 'liberation' through starvation.

nothing! The contras were handed at the negotiating table what they could not win on the battlefield.

In the short run the most likely result of the election is a coalition government between the FSLN and the bourgeois opposition. This would satisfy both sides: the opposition, because of the Sandinistas' control of the army and ties to the workers, and the Sandinistas, because it would help them curry favor with Washington. This so-called "government of national unity" would unite everyone except the masses.

On El Salvador, the Sandinistas concede that their territory will not be used for "aid to armed groups," meaning the radical nationalist FMLN rebels. They "urge the FMLN to carry out a constructive dialogue ... for peace" and foresee its agreeing "to abandon armed struggle" — conditions which they do not demand of the semi-fascist ARENA party regime. They even praise ARENA for "strengthening ... the already existing process of pluralist, participatory and representative democratization, which promotes social justice and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of Salvadorans." A bigger lie cannot be imagined.

THE SANDINISTAS' CLASS BASE

Why has the FSLN surrendered revolutionary principles so thoroughly? *Proletarian Revolution* has long pointed to the Bonapartist, pro-capitalist nature of the

regime. From the beginning it has advocated a "mixed," i.e., mixed private and state capitalist, economy. At first it ruled along with bourgeois parties and notables. But the Sandinistas were, in program and composition, a middle-class party which came to power on the crest of a mass struggle that gave them their popular base.

To maintain this base the Sandinistas had to break with their openly bourgeois partners and ratify, eventually, some of the workers' and peasants' seizures of factories and farms. But most remained in private hands, and their owners got ample subsidies — much of which went abroad and to finance the contras. Meanwhile factories and farms fell apart for lack of capital, workers lost jobs and the whole economy wound down.

This year the government laid off 5000 employees, while industry fired another 3000, or 21 percent. The budget was halved, ending subsidies on many goods and slashing health care and education. This, coupled with a severe devaluation of the currency to encourage exports, is exactly the sort of program that the International Monetary Fund and other imperialist bankers enforce on neo-colonial countries. But Nicaragua can't obtain IMF loans in return, since the U.S. blocks them. For the U.S. it's a game of "Heads I win, tails you lose."

As a result, according to the government's own report, "The national unemployment rate stands at about 35 percent and is marked by a high level of underemployment ... many workers are still able to find valid sources of income in the informal sector, although this too has been hit by the recession." (*Barricada Internacional*, August 19.)

What that last bland phrase means is that employed workers, whose wages cover about 20 percent of their needs, and the unemployed are driven in desperation to eke out a living by selling home-cooked food, cigarettes or factory stocks in the streets, watching cars, collecting soda bottles, etc. This "informal sector" is the only unemployment insurance offered by the "socialist" Sandinistas who are shoveling subsidies to the bourgeoisie.

WORKING-CLASS LEADERSHIP

It is also one reason the working class has trouble fighting back. Many workers have fallen part way out of the proletariat and are barely staying alive in the market-place. There is little point in going to the countryside to farm, since many small farmers are fleeing to the cities, unable to afford increases for rent, feed, seed and fertilizer resulting from the end of government aid to that sector.

But a more important reason is the misleadership of the working class. Most workers belong to unions of the Sandinista Labor Confederation (CST), a body which, according to Economy Minister Luis Carrion, "knows how to shoulder with maturity and great social responsibility the sacrifices which are needed to defend the country's economy," which "has openly declared itself for socialism," and which "is prepared to consistently support the mixed economy and ... work constructively with those private business people who recognize its social, political and economic victories."

In plain words, the pro-capitalist Sandinista government has a stranglehold on the unions. It breaks strikes against public and private enterprises and squelches wage demands in favor of profits — all the while telling

the workers that this is the road to socialism! No wonder many workers are disoriented. In the sharp but inconclusive strike wave of last year, conservative Stalinists and even outright bourgeois forces often demagogically grabbed the leadership of struggles for higher wages.

THE NICARAGUAN FAR LEFT

To the left of the FSLN the view is pretty cloudy. The most important groups are the United Revolutionary Movement (MUR), the Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT) and the Marxist-Leninist Party, apparently still known by the initials of its previous name, MAP-ML. Although these parties did not join in the shameful electoral accords with their incursions on Nicaragua's sovereignty, they signed another document with the Sandinistas that spreads illusions in the good will of the U.S., its regional puppets and the Nicaraguan bourgeois parties. A statement by Carlos Cuadra of the MAP bears out this impression:

"The important thing from the dialogue is that the right has now committed itself to the elections. I believe that they now have a legal space in which to win future elections if they lose in February. We did not sign the full document because we don't agree with certain concessions which were made to the right. For us it wasn't just important to include election mechanisms but to guarantee the democratic participation of the masses."

This supremely confused analysis comes from the most left-wing and anti-capitalist party in Nicaragua we know of, with the fewest illusions in the Sandinistas. The MAP-ML is the only party that does not call on the FSLN to create socialism. In fact, it recognizes that the Sandinistas are a middle-class formation seeming to stand above classes, which rules for the bourgeoisie against the workers and peasants. But even when it states fairly openly which class *can* achieve socialism, it does not call clearly for a second, working-class socialist revolution; it resorts to ambiguous formulations like "continuing the revolution to socialism." The MAP's program for working-class struggle is a hodge-podge of militant reformist, democratic and trade-union demands, offering no transitional program to show the way to socialism.

The PRT claims to be Trotskyist but makes purely opportunist gyrations, along with their international tendency, the International Workers League (LIT). During the 1979 revolution they claimed to be Sandinistas, fielding their own guerrilla army of Latin American volunteers and calling on the FSLN to make the "second, socialist revolution." Now the PRT condemns everything the Sandinistas do and denounces them for "imposing a left-Bonapartist ... bourgeois regime" — while still leaving open the idea that this regime could take the road to socialism! (*International Courier*, January 1989.)

The MUR is relatively new. It regroups former members of the FSLN, the right-Stalinist CPN, the MAP-ML and the LMR, an affiliate of the so-called United Secretariat of the Fourth International. It is under the ideological leadership of the latter. The MUR apparently has deeper roots in the middle-class left milieu than among workers and functions as a left critic of the Sandinistas. As of this summer it projected two

options for the elections, depending on whether the FSLN accepted certain conditions they posed, like more nationalizations and repudiation of the deal with the contras. One was to support the FSLN with many criticisms; the other was to run their own candidates. Either way, semi-Sandinistas are no alternative to whole ones — or to proletarian revolutionists.

THE SPECTER OF COUNTERREVOLUTION

The Nicaraguan revolution is fast unraveling. No matter how many concessions the Sandinistas make to the imperialists and their own bourgeoisie, it won't be enough. The U.S. is intent on crushing them for even thinking of parking a revolution in its "backyard."

For now, the capitalist cabal hopes to wipe out the revolution by "democratic" electoral means. But Nicaraguan workers, who justifiably resent the heavy hand of the Sandinistas, should have no illusions that an openly bourgeois government, however freely elected,

will bring them anything but misery and oppression.

In fact, a counterrevolutionary regime will be more repressive than Somoza. There are still hundreds of thousands of revolutionary minded workers, peasants and youth who made the revolution. That consciousness and whatever degree of organization remains will have to be crushed. A victory by the right, either on the battlefield or in the voting booth, will result in a Nicaragua like the El Salvador of today or Pinochet's Chile, not an idealized Costa Rica of the past.

The Nicaraguan working class needs to act under clear political guidelines. To sum up, these are: total political and organizational independence from the petty-bourgeois Sandinistas; firm opposition to the bourgeois opposition; military bloc with the Sandinistas in battle against imperialism and its puppets; proletarian revolution to create a workers' state and spread the revolution abroad. An authentic Trotskyist party on this program needs urgently to be built.■

What About the "Cuban Road"?

Many leftists wish the Sandinistas would follow the "Cuban road to socialism" in Nicaragua. This advice is wrong on all counts: Cuba is not socialist nor on any such road; the Sandinistas have closely followed the guidance of Cuban leaders like Fidel Castro; and in any case, advice about socialism is wrongly addressed to the FSLN leadership.

Cuba and Nicaragua both have radical nationalist regimes, and in both cases capitalist wage-labor relations of production still dominate their economies. The Cuban revolution was able to undertake sweeping nationalizations in the 1960s because of the relative prosperity of that period; its economy has also been subsidized by the Soviet Union. Nicaragua today gets little aid from anyone, including the Soviet bloc.

Castro has warned the Sandinistas not to do as Cuba did, citing the "errors" that cut his country off from credit and material supplies and isolated it diplomatically. Cuba survived because it had the most advanced Caribbean economy to begin with as well as Soviet support. Its sugar, oil refining, electrical and manufacturing industries gave the reorganized ruling class, based on statified capital, the surplus value needed for major reforms in health care, education and social services.

Now times are tough. Gorbachev has made clear that the gravy train is leaving. The Cuban workers' standard of living has dropped and will fall more. But no degree of belt-tightening will modernize stagnant industries or protect them from competition on the world market. That's why Castro is begging the Mexican bourgeoisie to invest in all areas of the Cuban economy.

Learning from experience, Castro not only urged the Sandinistas to appease U.S. imperialism; he also defends their "mixed economy" strategy:

"Nicaragua is a country with a much lower level of development ... Conditions are different. Economic development is the top priority ..., not the construction of socialism."

All this is very discouraging to the "orthodox Trotskyists." For example, the U.S. Socialist Action

group offers different advice to the Sandinistas. Never mind that conditions *are* different — take the road to statification. And if this were done a miraculous transformation would occur:

"The FSLN government, if it is to defend the gains of the revolution, ... must break out of the bonds of the mixed economy and take the path the Cuban Revolution took in 1960. This will require conscious planning and preparation for the overturn of capitalist property relations, a decision that will be enthusiastically supported by the majority of the Nicaraguan people.

"In order to move in this direction, an extensive system of workers' control must be instituted in order to both prevent capitalist destabilization and to begin to involve the masses themselves in democratic decision-making. These measures taken together would signal the transformation of Nicaragua into a state — a workers' state — where power rests directly in the hands of the workers and peasants themselves."

The notion that a government that has presided over capitalist property relations for ten years could change its class nature and abolish capitalism is entirely reformist; it has nothing to do with Trotskyism.

Despite their differences over circumstances, Castro and Socialist Action agree on the fundamental question: socialist revolution and building a "workers' state" are tasks that middle-class radicals do, with the workers lending only "support." But the reality is that middle-class radicals, enthusiastically supported or not, will achieve only the reforms that international capitalism can afford. And those will help *preserve*, not overturn, capitalist relations. Now that prosperity is ended, the capitalist anarchy disguised under statification reappears; that's why the Cuban economy is in crisis.

When the working class rids itself of illusions in the radical middle classes and builds its own revolutionary party, then it will be ready to take power enthusiastically itself without involving any condescending saviors.■

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Fall 1989

Defend Abortion Rights!

The resurgence of the women's struggle in the past year is welcome and necessary. Anti-woman reactionaries have been on the offensive for years. The Supreme Court's Webster decision in June was a resounding defeat — but it has served to mobilize a militant response by abortion rights activists.

Webster's echoes include the outrageously restrictive anti-abortion bills that were defeated in Florida's special legislative session. More bad-news bills are due in other states this fall and winter. Their limitations on public health funding will most immediately affect poor, minority and young women. As well, appeals of other abortion cases that would permit restrictions far worse than Webster are on the Supreme Court agenda from Minnesota, Ohio and Illinois.

The threat is not just in the United States. In other countries, anti-abortion reactionaries are looking here for inspiration and guidance. Defenders of women's rights in the U.S. must see that they do not succeed.

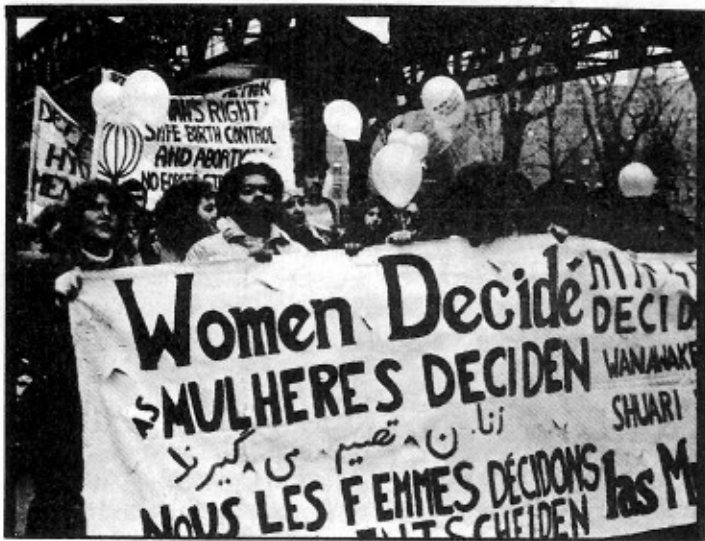
NOW'S RESPONSIBILITY

The Congressional votes to modify federal restrictions on abortion funding were a small victory, but the situation is still ominous. In no small measure, responsibility lies with the leadership of NOW and other reform organizations. They have always preached reliance on Democratic Party politicians and the capitalist system, which inherently oppresses women.

Last April the mainstream organizations were forced to call out the troops in Washington D.C. They hope for an even bigger outpouring on Election Day. But the fact that they organized mass demonstrations doesn't mean they've changed their basic position. They always fill the platform with the same pro-capitalist Democratic Party speakers, preaching the same weary messages.

"We represent the majority and the government must listen," they say. True, most Americans favor the right to abortion in some form. But the statement is still a lie. NOW does not represent the majority of women,

who are working class. It's not just glitzy public relations when NOW curries favor with Hollywood stars while denying women like Norma McCorvey (the "Roe" in the landmark Roe vs. Wade case) the right to speak on April 9. It is entirely consistent with NOW's upper-



and middle-class base.

The mainstream leaders expose their class position when they describe legalization of abortion as "pro-choice." Many working-class women are forced to abort out of economic necessity: they have no choice. Others are so limited by this society that they have no options other than a life dedicated to family and child rearing.

Abortion is not even a free choice for the middle class. In what is still a man's world, very few women can afford "to have it all" — career and family both. It is also bizarre to use "choice" as a euphemism for abortion rights. Abortion is not the contraception of choice for any woman; it is the last resort allowed by a system

continued on page 26

The Decline of the Nicaraguan Revolution

This past summer Nicaragua observed the tenth anniversary of its revolution. The celebration was muted. Workers and peasants looked back with growing disappointment and confusion — and ahead with gloom and foreboding.

Ten years ago the hated Somoza dictatorship and its National Guard were in flight. Militias of workers and youth which had sprung up in the civil war controlled the major cities and towns. Peasants were beginning to occupy large farms belonging to both pro- and anti-Somoza landlords. There was much talk of "socialist construction."

Most impressive to Nicaraguans and to working people throughout Latin America and the Caribbean

was the disarray and seeming helplessness of the U.S. imperialists. Despite their desperate efforts, they were unable to preserve any remnants of the Somoza regime, one of their most reliable clients. With the parallel growth of the revolutionary movement in El Salvador, it seemed that the expulsion of imperialism and its puppets from Central America was at hand.

THE CRISIS TODAY

Contrast that with the current situation. Much of the north of Nicaragua remains wasted and depopulated from the war with the mercenary contra army. Despite the cease-fire, the contras continue to kill and destroy,

continued on page 29