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# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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## Why Bush Backed Saddam The Emperor's New World Order



Kurdish refugees fleeing U.S.-aided Iraqi terror.

Saddam Hussein, until yesterday Washington's New Hitler, Butcher of Baghdad and Monster who Menaced the World, has now been demoted to the status of your ordinary lesser evil.

To save the planet from Godzilla, the Pentagon devastated Iraq's cities and army, massacred hundreds of thousands of people and occupied a sixth of the country. George Bush called repeatedly for Saddam's overthrow. But when it looked like revolutions might actually take place, through the Shiite and Kurdish uprisings in the south and north, Washington changed its line. After a few days of dithering, Bush made clear that he would let Saddam slaughter the

rebel populations without U.S. intervention.

This decision was made "despite reports of atrocities by Mr. Hussein's forces," the March 27 *New York Times* noted. These came on top of the horrors that the U.S. had already inflicted on Iraq through its month-long bombing campaign. According to a U.N. report, Iraq was left in a "near-apocalyptic" condition, pushed back to a "pre-industrial" age.

Washington says it is maneuvering for Saddam's generals to win so that they can prevent the break-up of Iraq and safely oust the dictator afterwards. Of course, these are people who loyally carried out Saddam's crimes up to the end. But whatever its excuse, the U.S. collaborated with his latest bloodletting. Saddam's planes and helicopters are flying through U.S.-patrolled air space to mow down Kurdish fighters and refugees.

The United Nations, the idol of the let-the-sanctions-do-the-dirty-work crowd, is also waist deep in gore. As we write, the five permanent member-nations of the Security Council have proposed to Saddam that if he accepts their cease-fire proposals, he may use his entire remaining air force to clean up the remaining Kurdish rebels. And the continued U.N. sanctions helped starve out the Kurds,

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forcing masses to flee and aiding Saddam's victory.

Bush's newly "liberated" friends, the Kuwaiti princes, are showing themselves equally ruthless: imprisoning, expelling, killing and torturing Palestinian, Iraqi and other Arab and Asian workers. These are people who lived in Kuwait — two-thirds of the population before the war! — and kept the economy going for the idle-rich Kuwaitis. Here too the U.S. is complicit: its Special Forces accompany and supervise Kuwait's death squads.

### IMPERIALISTS AND THEIR RIVALS

The U.S.'s turnabout appears shocking to those who bought Bush's (or Saddam's) propaganda. But it confirms what we pointed out in this magazine: a major purpose of the Gulf War was to stop Iraq from overturning the regional balance of forces. Now the specter of a splintered Iraq also frightens Washington: it too could upset the balance.

So Saddam was again enlisted on the side of imperialism, which he served as a Mideast junior partner for years. Now he has one more deed to do — "stabilizing" Iraq by crushing its people — before retiring. (Unless he manages to renew his previous contract with Washington, an improbable but not impossible scenario.)

The more serious bourgeois commentators were long aware of the danger of "Lebanization" of Iraq. What they (like most of the left) could not deal with is the deeper aim of imperialist war policy. As we wrote in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 37 last September, imperialism's main target was not Saddam but the oppressed peoples of the world:

**"Behind the hoopla over patriotism and petroleum, imperialism is reaching for new levels of belligerence. It is bent on delivering the word of its god, Capital, to the restive non-believers across the globe. The operation against Saddam is really directed against the masses, whose potential for revolution must be crushed at all costs."**

The bourgeoisie is not fully conscious of this goal. Pragmatically, it sees that it has to discipline rival powers or pawns who get out of hand. There is a parallel in economics. Individual capitalists see their competitors as their chief enemy. (Innumerable pseudo-Marxists agree.) In their

view, they invest in machinery to speed-up and displace workers not out of evil intent but because they are driven by competition. In reality, they are carrying out the inherent drive of capital to wage the class struggle against the proletariat. What they normally see as an unfortunate byblow is in fact the real goal forced upon them by what Marx called the "inner laws" of capitalism. (Of course, in moments during harsh class struggle when the bosses and their prerogatives are challenged, then they band together in full awareness that their chief enemy is the workers.)

So too with nations, above all imperialist ones, who wage hot and cold wars against rival nations in support of their national capitals. In doing so, they carry out the same inner laws of class war that deepen the exploitation of the workers everywhere and raise the profit rate. While normally the imperialist states see the masses as tools to be used or smashed in conflicts with rival states, at specific conjunctures the bourgeoisie perceives the deeper reality and *consciously* moves against its real enemy, the revolutionary proletariat. One such time was the united imperialist effort to crush the new-born Russian workers' state in 1918-20.

### WORKING-CLASS INTERESTS

The Gulf War, in sum, was a class war waged by world imperialism under U.S. leadership against the workers of the world. The devastation of Iraq was an open threat to impending social upheavals in Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as the Mideast. It announced that capitalism, already bleeding the "third world" dry, needed far more.

Revolutionary communists must clarify the class interests of the workers at every turn. Before the war we denounced the U.N. sanctions. In the war itself we advocated defense of Iraq and its people against imperialism, while pointing out the treacherous nature of Saddam and the Iraqi ruling class. Defense is still needed: the U.N.'s demand for war reparations by Iraq will only further immiserate the masses, not the rulers. The bloody imperialist powers are the last who have the right to make such demands; the U.S., for example, still defies the World Court's call for reparations for its crimes against Nicaragua.

In the northern civil war we defend the Kurdish rebels. The Kurds have long fought for the democratic right of national self-determination against Iranian and Turkish as well as Iraqi oppressors. The present pro-bourgeois misleaders do not call for an independent Kurdistan, which we favor, because that would anger Iran, Turkey and the U.S. Let the Kurdish people decide.

The Shiite-led rebellion in the south is less clear. On the one hand, many Iraqi workers, artisans and peasants,

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## Proletarian Revolution

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not all Shiite, are fighting for freedom from the merciless oppression of Saddam and the Baath Party. On the other, the uprising is influenced if not much aided by the counter-revolutionary and fascist clerics and capitalists ruling Iran. And although it decided to back Saddam, Washington via the CIA has a host of pseudo-democratic politicians ready to share the helm with the Shiite clergy, if by some chance the Saddam/military regime should fail.

Moreover, in contrast to the Iranian revolution of 1979, there is no evidence yet of any independent working-class mobilization in Iraq. Nor is the issue of self-determination raised here. We do not know the relation of the base to the purported leaders, and from the minimal information available to us, we cannot yet decide to give military support to the southern rebel leaders.

Rebel leaders are beseeching the U.S. forces occupying

ventures as long as it can. When it takes a step, it's a short one – and then it looks around to see where it is and what to do next. U.S. imperialism knows what it wants, and it knows it has to rely on military superiority. But it has only the vaguest and most shortsighted plans about how to reach its goal. Caution is its watchword.

Thus the U.S. tried to keep Saddam Hussein as its Mideast pawn up to the last moment. Despite the cover-up “investigation” of Ambassador April Glaspie’s exchange with Saddam, it is clear that the State Department offered to look the other way if Saddam grabbed Kuwait’s border oil fields and islands. But Saddam went too far, challenging imperialism’s hegemony and endangering its other clients: in sum, exceeding the prerogatives of a junior partner.

(Bush’s double-dealing with Saddam last summer pre-saged his recent two-faced wooing of Iraqi rebels, as well as



*Family of Palestinian intifada suspect, their home demolished by Israeli army. Mideast masses will rise again.*

part of southern Iraq to come to their aid. Some also appeal to the U.N. The working-class people of Iraq should have no illusions: the U.S. and U.N. are enemies, not allies. If Washington does aid any insurgents, that would mean that circumstances have made *them* the lesser evil; they in turn will be expected to suppress the masses, even their own followers, to keep Iraq within the imperialist orbit.

The U.N. likewise. It is populated by governments subordinated to or maneuvering with the great powers. As its sanctions and latest reparation demands show, it is an instrument for maintaining imperialist rule over the globe.

#### FROM WIMP TO WARRIOR

The Bush administration’s cynical postwar policy has somewhat cooled the triumphant flag-waving that greeted the cease-fire in late February. So far, the new line reeks of confusion and uncertainty, to the surprise of those who thought Bush had overcome his wimpy image through victory. No surprise here. The world is a mine field for imperialism, and Washington and its allies are searching daily for the best way to defend their interests. If that means that monsters become allies, so be it.

Bush’s shift to support Saddam sheds considerable light on the true character of U.S. foreign policy in this post-Cold War era. Bush is neither the heroic warrior the media now depict nor the wimp they once mocked. He has always been a careful manipulator seeking to rock as few boats as possible, in a climate of treacherously stormy weather.

The method of Bush’s White House is to avoid chancy

his call for Iraqi forces to leave Kuwait so that he could massacre them. And racists say *Arabs* can’t be trusted!)

For all the Pentagon’s vaunted “rapid deployment” capability, it took five months to prepare for war against a small, industrially undeveloped country. Iraq had a big army, but it was based on largely outmoded technology. Despite their overwhelming advantage in air power and super-weapons, Bush and his advisers hesitated before starting both the air and ground phases of the war.

One cause of the delay was diplomatic. Bush took pains to win the support of Egypt, Turkey, Syria and Pakistan through direct subsidies or debt relief. He cajoled the quirky French and delicately stroked the wealthy Germans and Japanese. He placated the Chinese rulers, whose murderousness toward their own people approached Saddam’s. He barely chided Gorbachev for attempting to broker a peace deal, even though the U.S. was clearly itching for war. And when it was clear that he would have wanted nothing more than to squish the pesky Israeli cockroach Shamir, he gently petted him instead. Not boldness but the utmost tact held the imperialist coalition together.

Militarily, months of sanctions aimed at starving Iraq’s civilian populace took their toll. The Iraqi armed forces were deprived of supplies and reinforcements. Then U.S. air power went to work in a blitzkrieg attack more violent than any in history. Only then did the coalition’s ground forces move, when they had essentially no opposition.

At the start of the war build-up, the media acknowledged that George Bush was having great difficulty “articu-

lating" reasons for the coming war. But by the time of the military pyrotechnics, they were joyously proclaiming that he had given his policy real meaning and had made clear his vision of the New World Order. That is far from true.

### THE VISION THING

Historical forces select useful human representatives. Individual personalities can place their stamp on events, but only within the parameters permitted by objective conditions. In this light, George Bush is the ideal instrument for imperialism's needs. He is a consummate bourgeois and a model political opportunist who played the power game all the way to the White House, an apt pupil of his mentor, Richard Nixon. He is utterly pragmatic, "common sense"-oriented, cautious to a fault and amoral to the core. He fits the moment when the U.S. imperialism faces a changing world situation, where genuinely bold action could stir up a storm and precipitate the system's downfall.

The classic example of Bush's caution was his reaction

## Anti-War Post-Mortem

The ruthlessness of imperialism and its friends is plain to see in the Gulf War's aftermath. The U.S.'s incendiary bombardment of Iraq and Kuwait, Saddam Hussein's slaughter of his citizens as U.S. forces benignly look on, the Kuwaitis' class vengeance against their "guest" workers — these are not tragedies of war but crimes against humanity.

Among the guilty are a number of stalwarts of the so-called left. Alexander Cockburn, in his April 1 column in the *Nation*, castigates several who supported the war, among them Paul Berman, Fred Halliday and Michael Lerner. Other social democrats in the DSA and the Campaign for Peace and Democracy backed the troop deployment but not the fighting.

Todd Gitlin wrote admiringly of "those who take collective security seriously." Showing immense trust in imperialism, he mocked "some on the left" who "bend language by warning that the United States plans 'genocidal war' on Iraq." (*Nation*, January 7.) Perhaps he will now explain the subtle distinction between genocide and the "near-apocalyptic" destruction Iraq suffered.

Cockburn himself has a shabby record, for he too endorsed the U.N. sanctions that set the stage for the war. Cockburn has dissected reports that exaggerated the deaths inflicted in Kuwait by Iraq's invaders. But to justify the sanctions, he endorsed the claim that the emir's rule was kinder than Saddam's. (*Nation*, Dec. 31.) Tell that to the Palestinians and Asians hunted down by their princely masters.

The National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East, never breathed a word, before or during the war, against the sanctions that deprived Iraqi civilians of food and medicine. Now it perceives that "the Iraqi people have suffered dearly" and nobly concedes "it is time to lift the sanctions" — since "the original Security Council demands have been met." But sanctions were fine until now, suffering or no.

The "anti-war" radicals and ex-radicals who defended, minimized and apologized for the war played their part in obscuring imperialism's crackdown on its chosen victims. They will be remembered. ●

in early 1989 to the overtures of Mikhail Gorbachev. The USSR was breaking down and Eastern Europe was desperately grasping at open forms of capitalism. The U.S. could have gracefully accepted Gorbachev's peace offerings and declared victory in the Cold War. It would have been a great triumph for Bush — but circumspection prevailed, and the Administration grumbled that the Soviet ideas were premature. A *New York Times* headline (May 18, 1989) noted "The Bush Team's Surprising Answer to Gorbachev's Proposals: Irritation." Why shake anything up?

The Cold War, after all, had its uses. Under the old world order, the U.S./USSR rivalry served to maintain reasonable stability in a constantly erupting world. It kept the working classes relatively subdued, often under the influence of the opposite superpower; it held in check the growing economic rivalries among Germany, Japan and the U.S.; it detoured the colonial revolutions onto the dead-end road of bourgeois nationalism. So, fearful that NATO and other stabilizing institutions would lose their *raison d'être*, Washington hesitated. Bush was criticized from left and right: by the liberals for not supporting Gorbachev's reforms quickly enough, by the conservatives for not crowing sufficiently over the Eastern collapse.

But his prudence paid off. The Eastern upheavals, with all their nationalist hatreds and economic desperation, proved so unmanageable that a more overt U.S. intervention might have cost more than could have been gained. Foreign policy specialists who had mocked Bush's caution now admit it has turned out for the best.

Likewise, although very unhappy over Germany's unification and the drastic shift in the European and world balance of power it embodies, Washington timidly went along. This circumspection delayed the inevitable clash between American and German imperialisms and the coming re-ordering of the post-Cold War world.

Bush remains a man of little vision, more pushed by events than pushing, neither comatose nor commanding. In today's USSR, for example, he faces a major conflict between Boris Yeltsin and the free marketeers, on one side, and Gorbachev and the his growing alliance with the Stalinist conservatives (and even the chauvinist right), on the other. He still uneasily leans toward Gorbachev out of fear of pushy nationalities and workers, but leaves a path open to the Yeltsin forces, ideologically more tasteful to the West. He will continue to straddle that fence unless the underlying civil war explodes and forces him to choose.

### NO WORLD ORDER

The media notwithstanding, George Bush's New World Order is little more than a catchphrase. Of course, something has to replace the Cold War and its institutions, some arrangement has to govern the newly prominent imperialist rivalries. But what will be the actual international mechanisms to defend "stability" and "order"? Bush hasn't said, because he doesn't know.

The U.S. will undoubtedly try to continue using the U.N. as a keystone for the new order. But that depends on agreement by the four other permanent Security Council members: Britain, France, China and the USSR. As well, a genuine "concert of nations" today requires accord with Germany and Japan, whose real power outstrips all but the U.S.'s. The chance that another conjunction of imperialist interests will reproduce the present Gulf War fellowship is small. And even if agreement is reached, in the declining



world economy the powers will hesitate to pay for such expensive operations. Thus the U.N.'s usefulness is limited.

In Europe, NATO no longer has a clear purpose, for good reason. The U.S. sees it as a tool for restraining German power, but is caught in a contradiction. It wants Germany to accept the costs of building up its own military, but it also fears strengthening a powerful rival.

A European alliance including the Soviets might provide a counterweight to Germany — but it might also allow German elements who oppose too close ties to the U.S. to deepen their relationship with the militarists and/or marketeers of the USSR. The Soviet crisis is relevant here. The growing influence of the Soviet military would force Germany to accelerate rearmament. Dismemberment of the USSR and other East European states would also encourage German militarism to fill the power vacuum and prevent independent mass initiatives.

In the Middle East, the U.S. does not yet know what to do with the “peace” it has won. For example, everyone expected victorious Washington to try to force Israel into a deal with the Arab potentates that would create a fig-leaf Palestinian state to contain the *intifada*. But after Secretary of State Baker's visit, the Zionists openly laughed at the absence of any pressure. Bush will eventually be forced to make some move on Israel; the later the better, he thinks.

The imperialists want no more Gulf Wars like the last one and so must preside over a regional balance of power. Washington needs help from Moscow, London and Paris to

control the arms race. It also must maintain its grip on Gulf oil areas as a threat over the economies of Japan and Germany. No institution or even semi-permanent alliance is conceivable that has room for the competing interests of Iraq and Iran, Syria and Israel, Egypt and Turkey. So the U.S. will insist on keeping not only its naval and air presence in the Gulf but ground bases as well.

These regional examples could be augmented by others in Southern Africa, East Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. They all show that institutionalizing a New World Order is an idea whose time has not come. The deepening crisis of capitalism drives the imperial powers toward increased protectionism and trade wars as they fight over a shrinking pie. The New World Order under the U.S. umbrella can only be a brief interlude before a new balance of power comes to the fore, dictated by a polarized cold war among Germany, Japan and the U.S., assisted by Russia, China, Britain, France, et al. Such combinations will dictate the new institutions, not Bush's New World Order.

This magazine predicted such an outcome long ago, based on our analysis of world imperialism and, in particular, the underlying weakness of the USSR that made the end of the Cold War inescapable. The Gulf War and the claimed New World Order only delay the inevitable. In an interlude like the present one, foreign policy can only be timid, conservative, makeshift — and bloody. The only way to try to hold the imperialist concord together is to suck the maximum out of the imperialized countries. ●

## The War and the Working Class

Imperialism's goals require intensifying the exploitation of the working classes in its own countries, not only in the third world. The bourgeoisie would have loved to use the Gulf War to escalate its anti-worker campaign, but it didn't dare. At home as well as abroad, the New World Order has not been institutionalized.

The explosive, militant American working class waged huge strikes from the late 1940's through the early '70's. Since then the ruling class has only gradually, and with few confrontations, dared to erode workers' standards. Under Reagan the poorest were attacked, producing the army of homeless in U.S. cities. Now the whole class is under siege, but the bourgeoisie's heavy artillery has not yet been used.

The Gulf crisis began with the economy already in bad shape. Economists calculated that it was heading for recession; for masses of workers and unemployed, the recession had hit a long time before. The shoot-up in oil prices and the economic jitters resulting from the Iraqi invasion were merely contributing factors to the recession. The Savings & Loan crisis, a naked case of capitalist greed, corruption and state collusion, symbolized the decay of the whole economy and had the markings of a rallying issue for the proletariat.

The Administration and Congressional leaders looked foolish last October when their proposed federal budget was rejected through a grass-roots taxpayers revolt. Protests came from the elderly, the upper layers of the working class, and middle-class people who objected to extending the Reaganite soak-the-poor doctrines to include them. Bush floundered openly over his tax and budget priorities, reminding many of the blundering Jimmy Carter. His approval rate plummeted in the polls, and he lost support for his Gulf build-up as well. Only the war rescued his image.

The attacks Bush has succeeded in making so far are those literally compelled by capitalism, like bailing out the S&L crooks at taxpayers' expense lest the whole banking system collapse. Even then he needed Democratic as well as Republican support, and still he used the pretext of saving the deposits of widows and orphans. He cannot make the decisive federal budget cuts which would completely antagonize the employed working class. All he can do is pass the crisis down to the states and cities, leaving it to the Democrats (for the most part) to impose cuts and raise taxes in compensation.

### SPOILS OF VICTORY?

Victory in the war was achieved at minimum cost. Much of the war materiel came from existing stocks, and the U.S. wrangled aid from other imperialists (they're still haggling over the amounts). As well, the outcome kept oil prices low. Thus American capitalism was able to keep inflation at acceptable levels.

But the war still cost an awful lot, an estimated \$40-50 billion (not including secret payoffs to some allies to garner support). Most significant, the hype for high-tech weaponry will further divert the U.S. economy down the path of military spending, not the productive investment that offers the only hope of competing with more up-to-date rivals.

Popular bourgeois economics makes a big deal out of consumer confidence, so it was hoped that victory would ease consumers' fears and set off a spending spree. Marxists know that the real fuel for capitalist expansion is the rate of profit based on exploitation in production, not spending. But even the consumer angle has been disappointing. There have been some increased sales in vital areas like cosmetics

and surfboards. The reasons aren't hard to grasp. Workers and even large sections of the middle class have become so squeezed that even if they wanted to, they can't go out and spend. As one "typical consumer" put it: "The country is feeling good about the war. I'm feeling good about it, but I still can't afford a new car." (*New York Times*, March 24).

In any case, the real capitalist game plan is *not* to increase consumer spending. On the contrary, it is a more massive attack on the working class: lower pay and benefits, speed-up, higher unemployment, lower social wage. Indeed, a month after the cease-fire it was revealed that half a million jobs had been lost during the war, that only 37 percent of the jobless collect unemployment benefits, and that 13 percent of U.S. kids are underfed, 17 percent in the cities. O Brave New World Order!

During the war, however, the capitalists were able only to dampen the brewing, broader class consciousness. The war drama did turn the popular focus away from troublesome issues at home, given the massive capitalist campaign

caution was not simply based on fear of middle class-led anti-war marches. Heavy losses would have triggered opposition to the war and cut off recruitment from the skilled layers the military now appeals to. (According to Woodward and Bernstein's book *The Final Days*, President Nixon, when told of the high number of U.S. casualties in one Vietnam War battle, replied "Oh, screw 'em." His protegee Bush was more afraid of what could happen at home.)

Bush overcame the "Vietnam syndrome" in the sense that the public was bamboozled into an orgy of patriotism over a foreign war. But this only lasts for short wars with few U.S. deaths: Grenada, Panama, now Iraq. It remains true that no war would be tolerated that had half the length and casualties of Vietnam. And even the Vietnam and Korean wars were waged on the basis of "guns and butter" – only minimal sacrifices were demanded of the working class at home.

The workers' strength, even though they themselves don't recognize it, prevents the bourgeoisie from carrying



"Anti-war" labor bureaucrats: big banners, tiny deeds. They left it to the Democrats, who left it to George.

for militarism and patriotism. But the war fever was not enough to convince workers that strikes are unpatriotic.

The war did not change the pattern of union struggles. To be sure, this meant little upsurge; but the period was punctuated by a few intense fights between entrenched unions and bosses bent on destroying them. Eastern Airlines folded during the crisis after a long battle. In New York, the Daily News strike erupted at the same time. The bitter Greyhound strike continues. But the bosses could not afford to risk a broad head-on offensive against the unions.

#### WORKERS AND THE NEW MODEL ARMY

Why couldn't the war be used to suppress the class struggle? The close tie between the mainstream work force and the Gulf troops, which served as fuel for the yellow ribbon garbage, could have sparked a working-class explosion if American deaths had mounted.

We foresaw ten years ago (in our pamphlet "*No Draft Is No Answer!*") that Washington would want to avoid a military draft because of its Vietnam disaster. It also had to upgrade the educational level of the volunteer army – in order to increase its technical capacity and, even more important, the reliability of a force with a large number of blacks. As the economic crisis deepened in the late 1980's, young workers found few opportunities to gain advanced skills in industry, whereas the military promised training and college aid. Accordingly, the army has come to reflect the higher, regularly employed sections of the working class, even the labor aristocracy.

George Bush's contempt for human life is well proved. But he took elaborate care to minimize U.S. casualties. His

out the attacks it wants. In one sense, the war was counter-productive: workers will not accept that their share of "our victory" is austerity. That sets up a vicious circle for the ruling class. Its fear of slashing the federal budget means that the federal debt cannot be slashed, thereby boosting the cost of capital around the world. This in turn helps prevent needed investment in East Europe and the "third world." Thus the U.S.-hegemonic New World Order accelerates the very instability it is supposed to calm.

This New World Order cannot last. Imperialism needs harsher methods, both to fight its own internal battles and to suppress the working classes. Back in the 1930's, capitalism's weapons of choice were depression (mass unemployment, starvation), fascism, and imperialist war. That again is its only real path to stability and order, the real "vision" which Bush cannot articulate. It will take a different sort of imperialist leader: bolder and more far-seeing. Bush is only the groom for a future Man on a White Horse.

There is also the working-class alternative: socialist revolution to destroy imperialism and create workers' states. For now that means the slow work of building the proletarian revolutionary party. The mass anti-imperialist fury foreseen in Arab countries during the war did break out, but there was no authentic communist leadership. Abroad and at home, workers desperately need the re-created Fourth International as an alternative to fascism and clericalism. We have seen that George Bush's butchery is as great as his caution. Unless the revolutionary party is built to lead the world's workers to socialist victory, imperialism will turn to its bolder alternative, one that will make Bush's bloodletting seem anemic in comparison. ●



# Gulf War No Victory for Blacks

George Bush and the imperialist butchers are celebrating their smashing of Iraq. They tell us that all Americans are proud of their victory – including the mass slaughter of Iraqi civilians and conscripts. “We’re Number One.”

The bourgeois campaign has had palpable success. No doubt, a wave of chauvinism has swept over sections of the U.S. working class. Polls even show that most Americans would back further military intervention in the Gulf.

But the propaganda machine has not transformed a country divided along race and class lines. That is why the new patriotism is shallow and the war had to be short and high-tech: no blood sacrifice was demanded. The capitalists have had to work overtime to stage-manage their “America is back” campaign.

and dying in the army.

Some black leaders attempted to explain these disproportionate figures as proof of successful integration of U.S. society. Pentagon chief Colin Powell said, “I’m proud of the fact that African-Americans have seen fit to volunteer to join the armed forces, even if it is a higher percentage.”

Powell’s argument that blacks signed up out of some kind of patriotic fervor is ridiculous: most joined for job opportunities, not to fight in imperialist wars. In fact, opposition within the military to the Gulf deployment was also disproportionately higher among blacks. The different attitudes highlight the myth of integration.

A glaring example of blacks’ treatment in the army was the 369th Transport Battalion, a Harlem National Guard



*Harlem's 369th Transport Battalion, over age and under-prepared, was sent to front lines as cannon fodder.*

Their biggest problem was to win black support for the war. A Washington Post/ABC News poll in early February showed 43 percent of blacks opposed to the war and only 48 percent in favor. This figure is especially significant because blacks were more likely to have relatives and neighbors serving in the Gulf and thus were subject to the “Support Our Troops” propaganda bombardment. Black distrust for the war contrasted sharply with the 84 percent of white respondents who supported the war.

## MILITARY OPPORTUNITY?

Despite being only 12 percent of the U.S. population, blacks are 20 percent of the military (including about 45 percent of military women!) and 30 percent of the troops in the Saudi desert. The injustice is blatant: blacks are denied equal opportunity in all walks of life except killing

unit. More than half had served in Vietnam; most were over 40, with an average age of 43. Yet they found themselves thrown into the front lines with little help or preparation – after being told they would not be stationed in combat areas. As one Vietnam veteran stated, “Since we arrived, it has been one lie after another.” A postal worker put it, “We have three strikes against us. We are from the Guard, we are from New York, and we are black.” And another soldier put it even more bluntly, declaring, “We are out here fighting two armies, the U.S. Army and the enemy.” He summed up the feeling of the black Guardsmen. “We have lost our rights. As far as most of us are concerned, we are prisoners.” (*New York Times*, Feb. 23.)

Black opposition to the war ran even deeper than resentment at mistreatment in the Gulf. Many recognized the hypocrisy of capitalist America that asks blacks to die for

freedom when there is so much oppression at home. While billions are being cut from education, hospitals and housing, the rulers find billions to spend on war.

Further, many blacks saw the racist nature of the attack on the Iraqi masses. True, some bought the chauvinist line that looks down on oppressed countries; blacks are not immune to the anti-Arab racism fueled by the U.S. media. Nevertheless, large numbers saw through these lies, recognizing underneath the same racist garbage faced at home.

This connection was driven home by the sadistic beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles by a gang of cops. On top of the video tapes, police radio transcripts recorded cops calling blacks "gorillas" and "lizards." Bush's "kicking ass" of "sand niggers" in the Middle East gave the green light to the same practice in the good old U.S.A.

#### WHAT VICTORY?

So when Bush says "We won a great victory," blacks and all workers should think twice. The capitalist bosses only talk about "we" when they are about to sock it to the workers and poor. This was a victory for the capitalists, for the exploiters. What will the workers "win"? The right to be freely beaten for traffic violations? Higher taxes, public service cuts and layoffs?

Unless the working class mounts resistance, the war will lead to increased racism and attacks on working people. U.S. patriotism is racist reaction wrapped in the stars and stripes instead of white sheets. The attacks on people of color in third-world countries can only promote escalating racist assaults in the U.S. as well.

While the capitalists are still not ready for all-out war against the American working class, Bush's triumph will give him a freer hand in attacking the masses. Even the feeble opposition of the Democrats has been virtually silenced. As to the union leadership, Lane Kirkland & Co. took a patriotic stance on the war, ignoring the black opposition to the imperialist attack on Iraq.

This opposition to the war can become a critical coun-

terpoint to American chauvinism. What is needed is a powerful organized movement, and this in turn requires a fighting black and working-class leadership. The opposition from Jesse Jackson and others was timid, however, because of their overall support for U.S. foreign policy. That's why he backed the imperialist sanctions that debilitated the Iraqi population.

#### BLACK YOUTH AND THE WAR

In the absence of an alternative counterposing class war to imperialist war and internationalism to narrow patriotism, the sentiment among blacks found no avenue for development into consciousness of the need to smash the capitalist system — that is, revolutionary consciousness.

This was especially true for black youths, an increasingly impoverished and alienated sector. Even among those who claimed to support the war, it was hard to find anyone who believed Bush's stories about why it was fought. While Bush tried to portray the war as a fight between good guys (in white?) and bad guys (in black?), black teenagers tended to see things more cynically. In their eyes, it was a war for oil and power, not a morality play. They saw the war in street terms: Bush was the head drug dealer, Saddam Hussein got out of line. Like any dealer, Bush couldn't let Hussein get away with dissing him.

While many black youths saw through Bush's hypocrisy, they nevertheless accepted it as the only possible reality. This is the way people with power are *supposed* to act. Kids "supported" Bush in the way they might support the best sports team; they identified with winners rather than losers. Youths who feel powerless to change society seek to identify with the most powerful. Tired of being on the bottom, they want to be part of "Number One."

But they cannot be part of this America, for that's the very system that is destroying the lives of young people. Real power means building a revolutionary party that can fight and destroy this rotten system. *That* is the war that blacks and all workers can truly "win."●

## The Winnie Mandela Scandal

Winnie Mandela, wife of African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, is currently on trial for participation in the kidnapping and beating of four teenagers in December 1988. She has long been revered as a spokeswoman for the African liberation movement by much of the international left. She is presently also an officeholder in four ANC departments. This trial therefore raises questions not only about her but also about the whole ANC leadership, which has rallied to her side.

At the trial, two victims have already testified against her. A third disappeared before testifying. The fourth, a 14-year old ANC activist, Stompie Moeketsi Seipei, had been killed by Mandela's chief bodyguard, Jerry Richardson, after a beating in her home in January 1989 — supposedly as punishment for homosexual activity. Richardson was already convicted of murder last year.

#### POLITICAL FOOTBALL TEAM

Winnie Mandela founded the United Football Team in 1986, a group of teenagers whom she housed and organized to be her instrument of political control in the black township, Soweto. The group has been linked to sixteen murders, according to the British journal *Searchlight South*

*Africa* (the source of much information for this article).

ANC supporters set up a crisis committee in July 1988 to keep watch over Winnie Mandela's activities. But nothing became public until Stompie's murder, at which point pro-ANC leaders felt forced to call a press conference. There Murphy Morobe, then general secretary of the United Democratic Front, stated:

**"We have now reached the state where we have no option but to speak publicly on what is a very sensitive and painful matter. In recent years Mrs. Mandela's actions have led her into conflict with various sections of the oppressed people . . . In particular, we are outraged by the reign of terror that the (football) team has been associated with." (Cited by John Carlin, *New Republic*, Feb. 18)**

Carlin notes that "the statement spoke of a reign of terror not in recent weeks but in recent years. Never since has anyone connected to the ANC spoken in an official capacity against Mrs. Mandela. Unofficially however the conspiracy of silence has begun to crack." The "cracks" have included a detailed chronicle of abuses given to Carlin by Lerothodi Ikanenga, a football club member; reports by another veteran ANC loyalist, Dudu Chili, that "Winnie's



boys" burned down her house; and reports by at least two other parents regarding beatings and killings of their teen-aged children by the team.

### NO JUSTICE FROM APARTHEID

Evidence of discontent about Winnie Mandela's record includes a protest by black social workers at the ANC's Johannesburg headquarters after her appointment as head of social welfare last August. There were also complaints registered on the matter from over 100 other ANC branches across the country. As well, there were recent protests when she was seated on the regional Pretoria/Johannesburg executive committee; reportedly a majority of delegates voted against her. (*New York Times*, Jan. 28.)

Certainly justice for Stompie Moeketsi Seipei and other victims of Mandela's "team" will never come from the apartheid state. We note, however, the pro-ANC U.S. *Guardian's* comment on the ANC's contradictory attitude on the trial and the consequent controversy in the ranks.

"At the center of the controversy are disputed charges that ANC members were responsible for the kidnapping of the prosecution witness. There is also considerable disquiet in the ANC ranks, as well as in the press, over the uncontested reality that Nelson Mandela and the movement's National Executive, having initially demanded a fair trial, now publicly challenge the government's right to hold a trial at all. . . . A second element of the criticism is that, having encouraged ordinary ANC members to dissolve their 'people's courts' and rely on the formal justice system, the ANC leadership's opposition to Winnie Mandela's trial looks like a double standard." (March 20.)

Not only the ANC leadership has backed Mandela. The South African government itself has been remarkably soft on her. One reason is the importance to the bourgeoisie of maintaining Nelson Mandela's prestige. He represents their last best hope for cutting a deal to prevent genuine revolution in South Africa.

### THE 1984 ANC 'MUTINY'

The Winnie Mandela case is not an isolated case of abuse of power. Rather, the ANC's use of violence as a method of repression against left-wing critics, both outside of and within the ANC, has a long history.

This repressive history has come to light most dramatically through the testimony of former members of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed force of the ANC exiled in Angola, Tanzania, and elsewhere in the 1970's and '80's. (See "Gulag in Southern Africa" in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 38.) Many of these "ex-detainees," as they now call themselves, were imprisoned and tortured by the ANC security department after a rebellion of ANC fighters in Angola in 1984. The ranks had been raising democratic demands, in particular expressing the widespread desire to return to the mass struggle then occurring inside South Africa. By its end, the "mutiny" was supported by 90 percent of all ANC fighters in Angola, numbering in the thousands.

As reported in our last issue, one of these former ANC dissidents was Sipho Phungulwa. He was gunned down in broad daylight in the Transkei in April 1990, only days after a press conference in Johannesburg at which he and other returning ex-ANC detainees had spoken out against the atrocities they had suffered in ANC camps abroad.

The Transkei is where the Bantustan military regime of Major-General Bantu Holomisa had given sanctuary to Umkhonto Chief of Staff Chris Hani during this same time

period. Hani, also a member of the South African Communist Party's politburo, was one of the leaders of the suppression of the 1984 mutiny.

The ex-detainees had declared at a press conference last year that the ANC was still holding more than 500 dissidents. The ANC Chief of Intelligence, Jacob Zuma, did not deny this; rather he claimed that the number was closer to 100. Zuma also publicly labelled Phungulwa "an enemy agent" shortly before his assassination. (See *Searchlight South Africa* No. 6 for a detailed analysis of ANC complicity in Phungulwa's death.) Nelson Mandela has rejected the demand for an investigation into Phungulwa's murder, just as he previously rejected the ex-detainees' demand for an investigation into their imprisonment and abuse abroad.

### COMMISSION OF INQUIRY DEMANDED

The heroic Phungulwa and the young militant Seipei have been murdered and cannot be brought back. However, all freedom fighters should support the call for an independent commission of inquiry into ANC abuses. An open in-



vestigation can help prevent further repression and bring out the truth. The working class and oppressed peoples have every right to know what acts have been committed in the name of liberation. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 36 for analysis of similar atrocities by SWAPO, now the governing party of Namibia.)

We expect that a serious investigation will reveal more parallels between the acts of the ANC Security Department abroad and those of Winnie Mandela and her "football team." The political relationship is already evident: bourgeois nationalists have historically tried to prevent resistance to their deals with imperialism, often going as far as murdering left-wing opponents. The method is not only inhuman toward individuals; it betrays the struggle for genuine democracy, an end to racism and the overall interests of the working-class.

In the final analysis, the achievement of even the bourgeois-democratic program requires working-class power through socialist revolution. Achieving "democracy" with apartheid formally abolished (and even with black figures in the government) will still maintain capitalist exploitation and racist inequality. South African capitalism, their imperialist allies and their loyal opposition, the ANC leaders, cannot tolerate South African fighters whose struggle reveals this truth to the masses. ●

# Soviet Miners Strike at Gorbachev

Three hundred thousand soviet coal miners went on strike this March in Central Asia, Siberia and the Ukraine against squalid working and living conditions. Their actions echo the strike wave of the summer of 1989 – the first mass, independent working-class response to Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts to reform the Soviet economy at workers' expense. And they have gone further: because of the failure to implement the concessions won two years ago, now many miners demand the ouster of Gorbachev and his regime.

More than higher wages, the miners want consumer goods to be made available in their regions. But that is a problem across the Soviet Union, since commodity distribution – always wasteful and inefficient under the anarchic Stalinist "planning" system – has been rapidly breaking down. The economy is also suffering a 5 percent fall in industrial output and a 10 percent drop in national income. Stalinism collapsed across East Europe for similar reasons.

Other groups of Soviet workers have already backed the miners. Metal workers at the giant Uralmash factory in Sverdlovsk stayed out for two hours in a warning strike. As we go to press, 10,000 factory workers in Minsk walked out and threatened a general strike, protesting the regime's draconian price increases. But aside from the miners, who founded a new trade union alongside the official state-controlled machine in October, the independent workers' organizations lack a mass base.

## THE RULING-CLASS CONFLICT

Soviet society is in turmoil. The killing of pro-independence demonstrators in Lithuania in January was only the latest in a series of deadly repressions of national movements in the subordinate republics. There have been massive demonstrations in Moscow as well, and police and army have been called out to suppress them.

In the face of the crisis the government is divided. The pro-market liberals are lined up behind Gorbachev's chief rival, President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Republic. They favor *perestroika* as Gorbachev originated it: open bourgeois methods like profiteering, price gouging and unemployment. In the USSR's deformed, statified capitalism, these measures signify deeper exploitation of the workers.

The Stalinist hard-liners insist on central control, but have accepted many of *perestroika's* "reforms." To defend their bureaucratic positions in the state-run economy, they yield to privatization more reluctantly. This enables them to speak in the name of socialism and appeal to workers, but their real ties are to the military and other Russian chauvinists, including the anti-Jewish, fascistic Pamyat.

For the workers, there is nothing to choose in either faction, although some independent union leaders have supported the liberals. Gorbachev continues to balance between the two sides, although he has turned more toward the hard-liners as the economy continues to disintegrate. Given the depth of the crisis, it is no wonder that many commentators have warned of an impending civil war. Gorbachev has sought several times to institute Bonapartist measures, but he lacks the popular support necessary to enforce them. Yeltsin, better liked if only because he is out of power, may therefore turn out to be a more dangerous strongman.

Yeltsin demagogically supports the miners' strike, but both ruling class factions are fundamentally against it. Russian Prime Minister Ivan Silayev, speaking in the struck Kuzbass region, asserted that Yeltsin's economic program "will be impossible to implement if Russian industry

collapses under the hammer blows of the strike." (*Financial Times*, March 25.) In the same spirit, the Soviet parliament, led by Gorbachev, tried unavailingly to invoke anti-strike laws to get the strikers back to work.

## THE PROLETARIAN VANGUARD

Interestingly, the true power of the working class is recognized in the U.S. bourgeois press – for the safely distant USSR. Reporters in *Time* magazine (April 8) wrote that the massive Moscow demonstrations pointed to "the kind of People's Power that overturned Communist governments in Czechoslovakia and East Germany in 1989 – or, for that matter, Czarist Russia in 1917." And they added:

**"Millions of miners and workers present an even more serious challenge. Armies might clear streets, but they cannot dig coal, build turbines or take over entire industries. Shaky as it is now, the Soviet economy could be paralyzed by the shock of a summer of strikes. The country . . . has a potential for a general strike."**

In the March 28 *New York Times*, Serge Schmemmann reported striking miners' discussions over crucial questions like the role of workers in the Soviet system and the desirability of capitalism. He summed up:

**"The striking miners set up workers' committees and a coordinating office in Moscow through which the various regions tried to share information and tactics. While this fell short of a unified command or a common cause in the tradition of the Solidarity movement of Poland, it had at least the makings of the first genuine nationwide workers' movement."**

Schmemmann observed, "This was the same proletarian vanguard that had raised the Bolsheviks to power, only now it had turned against them."

Not quite. The revolutionary working-class Bolsheviks of seventy years ago are the polar opposites of the conservative, bourgeoisified bureaucrats of today. A counterrevolution intervened, establishing the statified capitalism the workers face today. But he is right about the proletariat: it is finding its voice against the bosses, and it indeed has the capacity to challenge for state power.

East and West, the ruling classes are worried about the "anarchy" that the workers' movement represents for them. But it is the workers, not the Yeltsins or the middle-class liberals, who can construct a new social system. Workers can learn only in struggle to shed all illusions they have toward any sector of the ruling class. The time is ripe for a working class-led general strike.

While the right to self-determination must be the watchword of Soviet workers, their class unity in action demonstrates the superior wisdom of internationalism over dead-end nationalism. Now is also the time for them to create a new Bolshevik party as part of a re-created Fourth International, to lead the way out of the Stalinist morass through socialist revolution. ●

## The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory

The LRP's new book provides the indispensable theoretical background for understanding the collapse of Stalinism and the political program for the working class. See details on page 12.



## Cuba Faces U.S. Threat

# 'Socialism in One Country' No Answer

Three decades after the revolution, the Cuban people face a perilous future. With the end of the Cold War and the onset of George Bush's "New World Order," Cuba now confronts a more aggressive U.S. imperialism. The loss of Soviet aid endangers its underdeveloped, beleaguered economy. The collapse of Stalinism in Europe threatens to leave Cuba as an isolated outpost of "socialism."

George Bush's smashing of Iraq was meant to intimidate every "third-world" country, especially one that has challenged its powerful neighbor for so long. Even before the Gulf War, the end of Sandinista rule in Nicaragua had whetted imperialist appetites. While the U.S. recognizes the USSR's interests in its own diminishing empire, it expects reciprocation in Latin America. Clearly there is little room in the American orbit for an independent Cuba.

Cuba's stand against imperialism has won it many admirers. So have its domestic achievements in mass education and health care, especially among the poor of the Caribbean and Latin America. As well, the East Europeans' overthrow of hated Stalinism, along with the Beijing Massacre in China, make Cuba's reputation shine in comparison. But Cuba's working-class gains and anti-imperialist actions will now be tightly restricted, not only because of imperialism but because of Castroism's own policies and contradictions.

We will show here that the Castro regime has no claim to authentic socialism in the Marxist, working-class sense. Nevertheless, it is the Cuban people, not U.S. imperialism or its agents, who have the right to decide the future of their country. The working class, in the imperialist countries especially, must defend Cuba's right to self-determination. That means fighting the U.S.'s continuing efforts to strangle Cuba and any attempt at military intervention.

### FROM NATIONALISM TO STATIFICATION

Fidel Castro's initial policies following the overthrow of the hated Batista regime in 1959 were radical nationalist in character. His government abolished the largest estates and redistributed about a quarter of the country's cultivable land; it also agreed to trade sugar to the USSR for oil. Both actions antagonized U.S. capitalists, who owned substantial acreage in Cuba and the oil refineries. The confiscation of the properties of the rich mainstays of Batista were widely popular; they also meant a historical jump in the living standards of poor, landless peasants.

When the refineries refused to handle Soviet oil in 1960, they were nationalized. U.S. President Eisenhower canceled Cuba's sugar trade quota, and Castro replied by seizing other holdings. The U.S. retaliated with a devastating trade embargo. And in 1961, President Kennedy sponsored the Bay of Pigs invasion, which Cuba easily defeated.

Having defied U.S. domination, Castro led his country out of the American imperialist orbit and turned to the Soviet Union and its allies for survival. Cuba's current crisis is rooted in the decisions made in the early 1960's: the Bonapartist transformation of a U.S.-dependent capitalist country into a system of state ownership resting not on working-class power but on the Soviet alliance.

After brief attempts to industrialize, diversify its economy and go it alone, Cuba became heavily dependent on the Stalinist states. It benefited from preferential trade practices with Comecon and adopted Stalinist economic

planning methods. The USSR alone purchased 70 percent of Cuba's exports and accounted for 60 percent of its imports. Its loans and subsidies amounted to many billions of dollars per year (many times the per capita aid from East and West to the rest of Latin America).

During the Cold War, the USSR found it useful to sustain Cuba for several reasons. Allowing a "socialist" country to be strangled by imperialism would have been a humiliating defeat. Subsidizing Cuba provided a showcase for the Stalinist system and good will for the USSR in the third world; and it could be done relatively cheaply, given Cuba's small population. It also gave the USSR a surrogate for



*Fidel Castro encouraged Daniel Ortega's accommodations with imperialism, aiding the Nicaraguan revolution's defeat.*

intervention in Africa and Latin America, where the use of Soviet troops or agents would have provoked a U.S. response. Cuba was no pawn but still very reliable.

### CUBA'S STALINIZATION

In sum, Cuba adopted Stalinist statified capitalism. It is important to note that the statification of property, which underlies all claims that Cuba is socialist, was done at a time when the working class had been deactivated and subordinated to the regime. In late 1959, the national trade union congress elected as its leadership the "Humanistas" led by David Salvador, made up of Castro's initial supporters in the July 26th Movement. But in the process of fusing the Movement with the pro-Moscow Communists, Salvador and his team were purged, and the unions turned into instruments of management and the state.

In the Stalinist CP (which had proved its opportunism and contempt for the working class by supporting Batista for years), Castro found a force that could hold the workers in check. The CP's ties to the seemingly powerful USSR plus its Stalinist training and tradition enabled it to discipline working-class militancy. As in East Europe, where extensive nationalization had to await the violent crushing of the working classes, an undecapitated working class would have been too volatile for the regime to risk statification. In contrast to East Europe, the Castro leadership's popularity and anti-imperialist credentials made it easier to restrain the working class's self-activity.

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With East Europe shifting to "free market" economies and Comecon winding down, the Cubans today face the loss of their safety net. The USSR will now pay for the four million tons of sugar it imports at the world price rather than at higher subsidized prices. The Cubans will be hard pressed to pay for the fuel, raw materials and equipment they need to import to keep their economy functioning.

Given Cuba's vulnerability, these international changes have a major impact. Economic chaos is already under way. Time and again, the Cuban economy suffers from shortages resulting from the failed delivery of raw materials and parts from abroad. One Cuban economist claims that, due to slow deliveries from the Soviet Union, some Cuban industries are operating at only 40 to 50 percent of their normal capacity. (*NACLA Report*, Aug. 1990.)

Heavily dependent on sugar exports to keep its economy afloat, Cuba saw world prices plummet in the 1980's. It has also lost hard currency through the drop in oil prices, since Cuba had re-exported Soviet petroleum at a profit. (This accounted for 40 percent of hard currency earnings in the 1980's.) Cuba's most pressing problem is its huge foreign debt, on the order of billions of dollars.

To earn hard currency to service its debt, Cuba has turned to austerity measures. Rationing and domestic price increases on textiles, kerosene, sugar, and imported goods have lowered the standard of living. Household electricity has been cut by 10 percent and petroleum rationing introduced. Water and electric services are interrupted. Services take months to deliver. Long lines to obtain basic goods are the norm. Virtually all Cubans rely on the black market to obtain what they need.

Nor is the situation expected to improve. Actions by the Castro regime suggest that it is acutely aware of this. Castro has taken the lead in preparing the nation for a kind of "war communism," based on even harsher austerity measures. He has warned of the possibility of a "special period" where Cuba would cut back all social development programs for a number of years. Since the Soviet subsidy had allowed Cuba a relative looseness as compared, say, to Romania, its termination means tighter political as well as economic control from the center.

#### IN AND OUT OF RECTIFICATION

It would appear that Castro is engaging in the same kind of austerity measures we see in Eastern Europe and the USSR. The picture of rising prices, shortages of consumer goods, and the queues to obtain almost all goods and services, seems all too familiar. But whereas the other Stalinist societies couple austerity with elements of an open market economy, Castro calls for "rectification," a return to the "socialist morality" of equal sacrifice. Thus, despite these attacks on the Cuban workers, Castro and his leftist admirers continue to assert that Cuba remains true to a socialist course now abandoned by other Stalinist states.

Rather than a reaffirmation of socialism, however, Castro's rectification campaign is only the latest zigzag by the statist regime. In the late 1960's, Cuba carried out a harsh, military-style austerity program inspired by Che Guevara's notion of moral incentives. Popular among anti-Marxist New Leftists, the Cuban approach was an attempt to raise labor productivity while denying *material* gains ("incentives") to the workers. Workers' demands for higher wages and better living standards were dismissed as bourgeois and counterrevolutionary — a common idealist tendency of "revolutionaries" of affluent background.

In the drive for the illusory goal of 10 million tons of

sugar, the workers were pushed to their limits. The results were disastrous. As material incentives were cut, labor productivity declined and absenteeism soared. In 1970, it was estimated that 20 percent of the labor force registered absent; in Oriente province, the figure reached 50 percent. When moral incentives failed to inspire the masses to work harder, the regime resorted to labor militarization. Mass mobilizations, although they attracted many volunteers, were carried out under military discipline. This was made easier by the virtual disappearance of the trade unions and the absence of any institutions to defend the working class.

But the government could not abolish the class struggle. Workers' resistance to the regime's economic policies forced Castro to change course. During the 1970's, Cuba underwent changes that, in part, anticipated some of Gorbachev's reforms in the USSR. Pragmatic policies replaced the "idealistic mistakes" of the 1960's. More material incentives were introduced, even elements of a free market. In part, this was an acknowledgment of the widespread black market. In 1976 a sort of profit-sharing by industrial managers was introduced, and enterprises acquired forms of legal autonomy. As in East Europe, the statified capitalist bureaucracy was becoming bourgeoisified.

These changes created new problems. Corruption and lopsided income distribution led to increased dissatisfaction among the less privileged. The reforms whetted the appetite of the working class for more, at a time when the regime couldn't deliver the goods. And once more tied to its one-crop economy, Cuba was just as economically dependent as it had been before the revolution, still caught in the trap of world imperialism. In 1982-83 the economic recession hit third-world nations, and they haven't recovered since. As the prices for their exports fell, countries like Cuba found themselves unable to pay for needed imports. The resulting debt crisis meant that the masses had to be squeezed.

Castro's response was a turn back to "communist values" as a distraction from material gains. Economic austerity is coupled with appeals to revolutionary consciousness — moral incentives again. Once more the focus is on labor productivity, especially in export production needed to earn hard currency. Under the new policy, the regime has raised transportation fares, utility costs and market prices, while it has halted moves toward decentralization and free markets.

One area being "rectified" is workers' wages. Complaining that the level of wages and the social wage (free public services) were not supported by actual production, the regime has tried to revise production norms upwards. The average wage decreased in the latter half of 1986 when rectification was introduced. Not surprisingly, many workers saw rectification as a drive to curb wages.

#### CASTRO'S 'INTERNATIONALISM'

Enthusiasts of the Castro regime argue that Cuba's economic difficulties are to be blamed on the immense pressure of U.S. imperialism. Largely so, but that is not the sole reason. The Stalinist methods Cuba adopted have been exposed as backward and exploitative in East Europe, the USSR and China — wherever workers have found means to express their class interests. In Cuba, independent working-class activity is still tightly prohibited. Undoubtedly the Cuban workers will eventually recover their voice — and then we will see what happened to the gains they once won and what they think of the conditions they live under.

The argument that Cuba's problems are all the fault of imperialism defeats itself. Imperialist hostility toward radical change in the countries it subjects is inevitable. The mea-

sure of a rebel leadership, therefore, is whether its struggle and the system it builds point to a successful escape from imperialism — or to a blind alley. The only hope for an anti-imperialist revolution in an economically backward country like Cuba is revolutionary internationalism. That means working to spread the revolution from country to country to win power for the working classes and thereby undermine imperialism.

Success cannot be guaranteed. The Bolsheviks were inspired by internationalist goals; the Russian revolution was meant to be the spark for proletarian revolution in Europe. As the Soviet state degenerated, its leaders sought an illusory refuge from imperialism by opting for “socialism in one country,” and it was ultimately defeated. But capitalism’s triumph required the Stalinist counterrevolution.

In Cuba, in contrast, the Stalinization of the revolution coincided with its turn to “socialism.” Externally, the Cuban

regime — along with its military, economic and professional support for several third-world countries — has a long record of conciliation with non-revolutionary forces. Examples: Castro maintained a friendly alliance with the Mexican bourgeois regime even after its savage repression of mass strikes and protests in 1968. He endorsed the reformist “road to socialism” of Salvador Allende in Chile, which disarmed the workers, both politically and militarily, and led to the Pinochet dictatorship and the massacre of thousands. He flirted with the Peruvian military rulers, the Panamanian regime of General Torrijos and even the fascist dictatorship of the Argentinian generals.

These alliances exhibit Castro’s idea of “internationalism”: supporting national leaders who claim some independence from imperialism, at whatever cost to the masses of the country. In 1985 he explicitly denied that social revolution was the solution for third-world countries. Faced with

## ‘We Had the Honor to’ . . . Abstain

Recent events expose Cuba’s debatable internationalism. In the build-up to the war against Iraq, Cuba played an ambiguous role in the U.N. Security Council, voting against *some* decisions endorsing the U.S.-led war effort. In a Havana speech last September, Castro boasted:

**“We had the honor of being the only country to vote ‘No.’ [Prolonged applause] History will record the honor, the dignity and the courage with which Cuba acted during that moment of such importance to the life of humanity. It was necessary to take a firm position and we did not abstain — we voted ‘No.’ And we will vote against everything we do not agree with, even if we are the only ones. [Applause]”** (Quotes here are from the SWP’s book, *U.S. Hands Off the Middle East!*)

Very noble, but that vote was on one subsidiary resolution (No. 670, to embargo Iraqi aircraft). On more decisive questions Cuba had already failed to stand firm: it endorsed the imperialist rationale for war. Cuba voted *for* the U.N.’s demand that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait (Resolution 660), and *for* the restoration of the “legitimate government” of the emirs (Resolution 662). It shamefully *abstained* on the key resolution (661) ordering an all-out economic boycott of Iraq, itself an act of war against the Iraqi people. It also abstained on Resolution 665 authorizing the use of naval force to halt shipping into and from Iraq. And in an August 25 speech, U.N. representative Ricardo Alarcón boasted that Cuba was cooperating with the boycott of Iraq even though it had abstained on the vote.

Alarcón explained his government’s overall position:

**“To Cuba, the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of states, no matter what the reason may be; of the non-use of force in international relations; of the peaceful settlement of disputes between states; and of respect for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all nations are essential principles of our international order. It is in defense of those principles that we have expressed our disapproval and condemnation of the entry of Iraqi forces into the territory of Kuwait a few days ago, and have declared that this state of affairs must be ended with the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwaiti territory and the full restoration of Kuwait’s**

**sovereignty.”**

Thus, while Cuba opposed the extreme measure of war to force Iraq to withdraw, it nevertheless positioned itself with the rest of the cutthroats in the U.N. The idea that small states like Cuba can defend themselves by promoting bourgeois nationalist “principles of international order” has nothing to do with revolutionary internationalism; it is a legalistic, not a revolutionary, strategy. In this case the abstract principle (“non-interference . . . no matter what the reason may be”) placed Cuba alongside imperialism, not against it. Rather than expose the lie that the U.N. or any imperialist institution can defend the oppressed nations, Cuba disoriented oppressed masses throughout the world.

Moreover, Cuba endorsed the dubious notion that Kuwait is a nation entitled to self-determination. In fact it is an imperialist enclave whose rulers operate in Europe more than “at home.” In a message from Fidel Castro to all the Arab heads of state, cited by Ambassador Alarcón on August 9, Castro endorsed the restoration of Kuwait’s “legitimate” emir. He added:

**“Let me share with you, Your Excellency, the certainty that inspires me of the wisdom and courage of the leaders of the Arab nation, and the vitality of its institutions.”**

These wise and courageous leaders include not only the emir but also the Saudi king, the Syrian butcher and the Iraqi dictator himself. More:

**“Nothing and no one can replace this strength, this authority and this morale in the immediate search for a negotiated solution to a conflict between two Arab peoples.”**

Here Castro asserts the rights of the nationalist leaders as opposed to imperialism. But he overlooks how much their “strength and authority” derives from imperialism. Any revolutionary with the slightest regard for the masses of the Arab world would insist that it is the Arab working people who can and must replace the killers and slaveowners installed by imperialism. But Castroist nationalism requires support for and non-interference with *every* nationalism, even the most retrograde. Revolutionary opponents to Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Hafez al-Assad in Syria, etc., can expect no help from Fidel. Remember the Eritreans. ●



the massive international debt crisis, he proposed a "new international economic order" based on reconciliation with imperialism: not a revolutionary repudiation of the debts but a gracious imperial cancellation. The *Wall Street Journal* was astonished: "Mr. Castro sounded less like a subversive than a worried banker." (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 24.)

Even when Cuba defended Angola against South Africa in the 1970's, it enforced imperialist stability – for example, by shielding Western-owned oil installations in Cabinda from attack by Congolese rebels. Castro's worst betrayal was in Ethiopia, where he turned against the Eritrean liberation movement and sent arms and troops to the bloody Mengistu regime when it became the USSR's ally.

With his long anti-worker record and service to Stalinism, why do many on the left look to Castro as an alternative to East European bureaucratism? The fundamental



difference is that the Cuban revolution was a popular (although not a mass) struggle that defeated a brutal dictator as well as imperialism at the outset. Castro was not another bureaucrat imposed by Moscow.

#### WAS THE CUBAN REVOLUTION SOCIALIST?

This fact has led some leftists to exaggerate Castroism's achievements and regard it as genuine socialism. Such views were given theoretical cover by pseudo-Trotskyists, led by the U.S. Socialist Workers Party in the 1960's. A recent version comes from Malik Miah of Socialist Action (an SWP split-off), who contrasts Cuba with Nicaragua. Addressing leftists shocked by the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas, Miah claims that the "Cuban road to socialism" was the "path not taken" in Nicaragua. (*Socialist Action*, Nov. 1990.)

Why did Nicaragua fail to become another Cuba? Miah blames a failure of leadership. Specifically, he charges the FSLN with defending a "mixed economy" and not expropriating the capitalists. In contrast, the Cuban leaders "refused to compromise with imperialism" and local capitalism.

Miah goes on to link the Castro strategy in Cuba with the Bolshevik leadership of Lenin.

**"For the first time since the Russian Revolution a revolution succeeded because of the actions of its leadership. (This stands in sharp contrast to the overturns of capitalism in Eastern Europe and China after World War II.)"**

That is, while it is supposedly possible to create "deformed workers' states" as in China and East Europe without revolutionary leaderships, Cuba's leadership was revolutionary and therefore achieved even more: a genuine, not deformed, workers' state on the road to socialism. Of

course, as we have often pointed out, the notion that workers' states can be created by non-proletarian forces violates the basic conception of Marxism; socialist revolution means proletarian leadership. To deal with this blatant contradiction, the Castro boosters have to go farther. They stretch the bounds of Marxism and reality to argue that Cuba's was a *working-class* socialist revolution.

#### EXPLANATORY SOCIALISM

Miah makes this case by first explaining, correctly, that the July 26 Movement had been led by petty-bourgeois elements, with enthusiastic support among the masses. The Castro leadership consisted of "genuine democrats" who sought to implement an anti-imperialist, bourgeois-democratic program. How then did they transform themselves into working-class Bolsheviks? Just as in East Europe, they

*Cubans protest TV Marti, the U.S.'s television disinformation service: "An electronic Bay of Pigs."*

nationalized capitalist property, statified foreign trade and began economic planning. Still, this all took place without a proletarian revolutionary party, without workers' councils, even without action by the Cuban trade unions. The key for Miah appears to be that these steps had mass support:

**"They were not administrative actions. Each expropriation and other acts were explained to the masses. The workers and peasants understood them. They were mobilized to carry them out and consolidate the political and economic expropriation of the old ruling class."**

Some of this is true. The masses were indeed mobilized to hear Castro explain his policies to them, and they undoubtedly did approve the expropriation of their old bosses. But the workers did not make the decisions themselves. They have always been denied the opportunity to "fit themselves for power," in Marx's words, by exercising power in the course of making and running their so-called workers' state. Explanatory, plebiscitarian "socialism" means that their all-wise bosses do it for them.

Similar explanations were given for the Stalinist takeovers in China and East Europe. Mass support for eliminating hated bourgeois exploiters through statification of property does not distinguish working-class socialism from petty-bourgeois nationalism.

One argument sometimes given is that the 1959 revolution was accompanied by a general strike of the working class. So it was, but the strike was far more symbolic than decisive: it occurred after Batista & Co. had already fled the country, and it was quickly called off by Castro. The strike did, however, impress on the new coalition government (of Castroists and traditional liberal capitalists) the need to offer concessions to the working class.

The case that Cuban Stalinism is qualitatively different from discredited East European and Chinese Stalinism rests on the leadership's supposed revolutionary consciousness. But this case is belied by Cuba's relation with the Nicaraguan revolution. Indeed, as an article in the same issue of *Socialist Action* points out, Cuba advised Nicaragua against taking the Cuban "road to socialism." It cites Cuban Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodriguez in 1984: "We don't believe that the Cuban model is to be exported either to Central America or to the rest of the world."

#### MIXED ECONOMY VS. NATIONALIZATION

Castro was even clearer on his support for the mixed economy. The top priority for Nicaragua was economic development, not the construction of socialism, since Nicaragua was much less developed than Cuba had been.

**"I think the Nicaraguan plan – and I have no disagreements with it, neither theoretical nor practical, and I say that sincerely – is perfect, given the conditions in their country and in Central America."**

*Socialist Action* attacks these views for obstructing the course toward socialist revolution in Nicaragua. (Of course, the Sandinistas could not have taken such a course, since they were no more working-class than the Castroists.) Yet Castro's advice to Nicaragua was essentially the same petty-bourgeois nationalist view that shaped the Cuban revolution at the start. And his assumption that Cuba was sufficiently developed for socialism is pure Stalinist idealism. The only difference is that Cuba dealt with imperialism's attacks by nationalizing its property, whereas the Sandinistas tried to be more accommodating. In the 1980's, Castro feared that if Nicaragua challenged the U.S. in its own hemisphere, that would also bring down imperialist wrath on his island.

Cuba had followed the East European model of "socialism" via top-down nationalization, which leads to stultified capitalism. By 1979, however, Stalinism's economic decay was already sharply felt, and the Soviets knew they could not subsidize another client in the U.S.'s sphere of domination. So Castro was carrying out the Soviet line when he urged the Sandinistas not to "go socialist."

As well, a radical measure like full nationalization was dangerous without discipline over the workers. It would have tempted the revolutionary Nicaraguan proletariat to run industry itself and create its own state. The Nicaraguan Stalinists (like Stalinists everywhere by that time) had lost the power to control the working class. Cubanization was therefore not a possibility.

By encouraging the Sandinistas' accommodations, Castro aided the defeat of the Nicaraguan revolution and helped keep Nicaragua's workers and peasants under the gun of imperialism and the counterrevolution. Castro's internationalism turned out to be little different from Stalin's "socialism in one country."

#### CASTRO VS. GORBACHEV

Castro has positioned himself as the orthodox defender of communism in opposition to Gorbachev's reforms. While Gorbachev has moved the USSR towards traditional market capitalism and seeks to promote the image of a responsible imperialist power, Castro champions more centralized stultified capitalism. He still goes heavy on the anti-imperialist rhetoric. Given Washington's absolute rejection of Cuba's post-Cold War overtures, he has little alternative.

Despite these differences, Castro and Gorbachev continue to face the same task, keeping the working class in check. Gorbachev deepens the workers' exploitation by

promoting openly bourgeois policies. Castro's method is to maintain bureaucratically "planned" austerity and to accommodate with imperialism in the international arena.

Leftists who attempt to counterpose Castro to Gorbachev are only grasping at straws; there is no principled difference between them. Castro still needs the Soviets, so his criticisms are carefully worded to avoid an open break. As he said in 1989:

**"We must continue to develop our ties with the socialist countries, regardless of their style or model of building socialism. We have our own ideas, but we start by proclaiming our absolute respect for the right of each socialist country to try to build socialism in the manner and with the methods it sees fit. What they do does not involve us."** (From the SWP's compilation of Castro speeches, *In Defense of Socialism*, p. 135.)

This proclamation was false from every angle. Even from that of Castro's self-interest: the pro-Western course of the East European regimes led to governments that halted aid to Cuba. Thus what they do indeed does "involve us," as any internationalist would have known. Moreover, Fidel was lying: his "respect" for fellow "socialists" did not extend to allowing Cubans to read the reformist Soviet press. The idea of many roads to socialism really means little but mutual non-interference: you Europeans may have to make concessions to your workers and intellectuals, but not we. Whatever you do, it is bourgeois and counter-revolutionary for Cuban workers to demand their rights of class independence. So keep your *glasnost* to yourself.

Castro's supporters on the left can hardly take much comfort from his criticisms of Gorbachev, since Castro has to line himself up with the *right* wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy (linked in turn to various ultra-nationalist, racist and even Czarist forces). In this Castro is true to his past. He has been a consistent opponent of every mass struggle against the Stalinist regimes. He defended the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia – conveniently overlooking his "essential" principles of non-interference. He has never been a left challenge to Stalinism; his opposition to marketizing "reforms" is not a revolutionary alternative but rather an attempt to preserve the bureaucracy's monopoly on power.

#### FOR AUTHENTIC SOCIALISM

The Cuban revolution was a tremendous blow against imperialism. But petty-bourgeois nationalism, including the Stalinist variant, offers no way out of the imperial stranglehold. Castro has spent three decades propping up the carcass of Stalinism. Rather than a genuine international revolution, he has always promoted the illusion that real independence can be won without overthrowing imperialism.

Castroism represents not a way out of the imperialist grip but, in Trotsky's words, the "reactionary utopia" of a nationally isolated "socialist" society doomed to backwardness. Cynicism abounds in the third world today; antediluvian ideologies like Islamic and Christian fundamentalism bloom because the masses, still hating imperialism, learned to distrust the "Marxist" secular alternatives. For this Castro bears much responsibility.

Cuba is in grave danger. Only the international working-class struggle can save it from imperialist encirclement. The workers of all countries must learn to overcome imperialist patriotism and "law and order"; in this they will get no aid from Castro and his diplomats. That task requires the re-creation of an internationalist revolutionary party – the Fourth International. And that means confronting Stalinism in both its Gorbachev and Castro forms. ●



# New York

continued from page 20

funds are depleted, but at the same time there is immense, ostentatious wealth in this country, much of it in New York. The gap between private affluence and public squalor is a result of conscious policies of federal, state and city governments. They give huge tax breaks to the capitalists and also finance the government by issuing bonds, which means borrowing from the rich and paying them back with tax-free interest. To guarantee interest payments, they squeeze the working class harder.

Some labor and minority leaders have a more appealing motto than "Share the Pain": they also say "Tax the Rich." This slogan sounds like simple justice, and if it meant that unions would wage a real fight against austerity, instead of just negotiating its terms, it would be a step forward. But that's not what's happening.

Take the "Alterbudget" plan raised last fall by the City Project, a lobbying group backed by civic and labor leaders. Alterbudget proposes a progressive surcharge on the city's personal income tax, which would hit hardest at families with incomes over \$50,000 per year. This is high pay for an individual worker, rarely achievable without a lot of overtime. But it's not a "rich" income for a family with two wage earners or for a worker with several children.

Unfortunately, bureaucrats like Stanley Hill have made favorable noises about taxes that would hit workers as well as the rich. Given the Miller proposal, it is only a question of how soon the union bureaucrats will endorse it as "a step forward." Assemblyman Al Vann, head of the Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus, has already done so. If such a bill passes, private sector workers will be led to blame those in the public sector for the high taxes saddled on all. The real rich will cry all the way to the bank.

A less compromised proposal comes from CWA Local 1180, which would limit increases to those in the \$100,000-and-up income bracket. But there's a basic problem with all the Tax the Rich schemes: even if adopted, they would do little to solve the real economic crises of city and state. Alterbudget and Local 1180 would raise just over \$1.8 billion, less than the \$2.2 billion gap in Mayor Dinkins' budget last fall (since grown to \$3 billion). State Senator Leichter's plan for the state budget likewise falls short of Cuomo's \$6 billion-plus gap. None of the proposals are sweeping enough to deal with the overwhelming social crises of homelessness and joblessness; they aim only to maintain the miserable status quo.

## CAPITALISM AND ITS CRISIS

Lastly, even if a formal tax the rich proposal were enacted, the capitalists would find innumerable ways to evade it and pass the costs onto the workers. Individuals can move elsewhere to escape the city's jurisdiction: that's what exclusive suburbs are for. Banks and corporations can pass the costs of taxes onto the working class through price and rate increases. Such evasions are possible because the capitalist class, the handful of people who own the giant industrial corporations and financial institutions, controls the government and all the Republican and Democratic politicians.

The capitalist politicians won't really tax the rich because capitalism's very existence — not just the future of individual bosses, businesses and banks — depends on keeping profits high. The U.S. economy is on the edge after a decade-long binge of piling up enormous debts, looting the economy, borrowing billions abroad, destroying workers' savings in the S&L's, and undermining their own banks. The only possible capitalist solution is to cut wages, wipe out jobs and gut public services — in a word, to squeeze more profits from labor.

It's true across the world. Competition over profits among German, Japanese and U.S. capitalists is getting rougher. Washington is trying to strengthen its hand

## Transit Union Prepares Sellout

by a TWU Shop Steward

At a time when New York's city and state officials are trying to retract the miserly contracts they signed with public-sector workers, the most powerful municipal union, the Transit Workers, is entering into contract discussions. The TWU leadership is already planning its sellout.

President Sonny Hall wrote in the union paper that the TWU needs contract demands that "make sense and are defensible to the state legislators who must fund the contract" — that is, to the capitalist politicians engaged in a slash-and-burn campaign against public services.

The Transit Authority's most infuriating demand is that the union members' pension fund go to finance its budget deficit. This is so outrageous that even Sonny Hall has threatened to strike unless the pension money goes instead to pay for "wage increases" — out of one of our pockets into another. His other demands, like more safety training, also cost nothing. His plan is undoubtedly to concede plenty to the TA, get a "wage hike" as described, and claim victory.

The bosses have already leaked their plan for dealing with a "worst-case" scenario: a 10 percent cutback. It

threatens a 10- to 35-cent fare hike, 1800 lost jobs, and "dramatic curtailment of key programs that impact safety, maintenance and service reliability, cleanliness and customer environment initiatives."

TWU Vice President Anthony Corona said, "I don't believe they would really do this. It would cause tremendous problems." As if that would stop the bosses from cutting back — only a massive working-class fightback can do that. But in face of the threat to dismiss permanent workers for the first time in 40 years, the union can only pray.

In the past year the TWU leaders allowed management to lay off hundreds of provisional trackworkers and impose worse hours in track, structure, train operator and other divisions. Then, when this was successfully accomplished, the bureaucrats called ill-prepared demonstrations — as though to prove that protest is useless.

For all that, the membership is angry and receptive to the possibility of a strike, although President Hall in reality intends no such thing. With the transit workers in the lead, a general strike could halt the capitalist budget assault in its tracks. ●

through militarism. U.S. capitalists consider the Gulf War's enormous costs a wise investment that will ensure the dominance of American imperialism. They expect to be repaid many times over by extracting more profits out of working people everywhere. The slaughter of more than 100,000 Iraqis was a deliberate war aim, designed to teach the masses of the world that the U.S. is boss and must not be opposed.

#### WHY CAPITALISM SPENDS FOR WAR

The "paradox" of billions for war and pennies for health, housing and education is actually easy to understand. The capitalists are delighted to spend billions on war because that increases their profits and overall social control. They object to spending for public services because that lowers their profits. Likewise, the "paradox" of taxing

Given these tactics, many workers saw the result of the Daily News strike as a victory. There the workers lost 800 out of 2500 jobs in order to "save their unions." But on returning to work, they were also rewarded with new owner Robert Maxwell's retention of union-busting publisher, James Hoge. More such victories and we are all doomed!

#### THE REAL ALTERNATIVE

In contrast to "Tax the Rich" notions that leave the capitalists in power (and to union policies that accept mass layoffs), the real answer to capitalism's decay is revolutionary working-class socialism. Then the working class won't have to "share the pain." We won't have to tax the capitalists: we will *expropriate* them and use the accumulated wealth of society for the good of all. A workers' state would be able to set up and maintain critically needed public



When labor bureaucrats say "Share the Pain," workers get the pain, Wall Street keeps its shares.

working people in order to bail out the Savings and Loans while cutting back wages is equally understandable. It all boosts profits.

The present crisis is so deep that although workers have already lost much, that's only a small down payment on what the bosses and their system need. No wonder Wall Street regards the present slashes in New York City and State as far too little.

The strategies of the labor bureaucrats are designed not to win workers what we need but just to slow our losses.

works and offer jobs to everyone.

Most workers, however, still see no alternative to the labor bureaucrats as leaders of the working class. Our task as revolutionary communists is to show our fellow workers that they are not weak, that they can transform society. We fight for a general strike against the bosses' attacks, not only to convince the bosses but also the workers themselves of the enormous strength our class has. When workers go into action, many will join the struggle to build the revolutionary proletarian party to lead our class to power.●

## CUNY Under the Knife

Once again the City University of New York is under attack. CUNY is the island of hope for many young people in New York. Its 200,000 students are the sons and daughters of the working class. Many are working their way through college themselves, often full time; it is their ticket for a life out of poverty. And the working-class in New York today is in its majority composed of blacks and Latinos, the designated first victims of austerity.

That is why CUNY is under the knife. The attack is part of the wider assault on education, hospitals, transit, youth programs, child care, abortion rights — everything that working people of all races need to make life tolerable.

#### WORKING-CLASS VICTORIES

From its inception in 1838 until 1976, City College, the oldest college of CUNY, was tuition-free. CCNY is located

in Harlem, but until 1970 had a student population that was almost all white. In 1969 a successful battle led by CCNY students was waged for Open Admissions: any high school graduate now had the right to attend CUNY.

Since then there has been one attack after another — from critics who claim that academic standards were lowered, from city and state officials who slashed budgets, imposed and then raised tuition. With poverty-level funding, Open Admissions has become a fraud: while all high school graduates are allowed into CUNY, many are thrust into endless remediation and tens of thousands are eventually forced out.

In 1976 New York City went bankrupt. Part of its "rescue" was the takeover of much of CUNY by the state, with the resulting cutbacks. These were imposed not just for economic reasons; one study showed that tuition receipts



fell short of the higher clerical costs and state financial aid that went with them. No, CUNY was hit to convince capitalists that benefits for New York workers were under control so that the climate was safe for profits.

In 1989 Governor Cuomo tried to cut CUNY again but was partially blocked by a successful student movement. The highlight was a march by 10,000 angry students on Wall Street that forced him to rescind a \$200 tuition increase — one of the few real working-class victories in New York in recent memory. However, the student leaders (both student government careerists and the radical but elitist Students for Educational Rights at CCNY) stopped short of building a mass student organization, leaving students vulnerable to the next round of cuts.

More to blame were the union bureaucrats of DC 37 and the Professional Staff Congress. Unwilling to engage in a joint fightback, they tried to turn workers against students by saying that cancelling the tuition increase would mean layoffs. Workers were fed the usual crap: "there's not enough money" and "the cuts aren't going to be as bad as they say." Under this misleadership, workers were laid off, departments went without simple necessities like paper, and daycare centers and other essentials were cut below their already bare-bones budgets.

The CUNY administration, including the social-democratic chancellor, Joseph Murphy, also chose to do nothing but business-as-usual lobbying. Its approach is always to beg for funds for CUNY as a prestigious institution — at the expense of other vital social needs. Such efforts undercut a united defense against all the anti-worker attacks.

#### PLANNED SHRINKAGE

This year, Cuomo has proposed a budget that includes a \$500 tuition increase and a \$400 drop in state tuition assistance (TAP) for next year. This comes on top of a \$200 increase this year, meaning a 56 percent increase for those whose family incomes are too high to get TAP, and a \$1100 increase for the poorest students over a two-year period. No official will say, but the cuts are rumored to be too large to mean anything but hundreds of layoffs, closings of whole departments and possibly of two or three of the 19 CUNY campuses.

That's not all. The new chancellor, W. Anne Reynolds, thinks Open Admissions must go. Her plan is first to institute new requirements for graduation, then to make these university entrance requirements to keep enrollment down.

At first glance, these proposals don't sound so bad. The

stated purpose is to put pressure on the high schools to do the job of educating the children of New York. No one will be able to get a bachelor's degree without first satisfying the requirements for an academic high school diploma — including four years of English and three years of high school math and science (or their college equivalents).

But the effect of these standards, even if they remain only "exit" requirements, will be devastating. Three years of math and science is a barrier imposed on non-science majors at no other university! Demanding that CUNY's many foreign-born students take four years of high school English — much more than the current English proficiency requirement — creates an unnecessary burden for students who have already studied literature in their first language. As a result, it will take much longer to graduate, and many more students will drop out of college.

The university claims that all these courses should have been completed in high school. Perhaps so, but to make that a reality today would take enormous improvements and investments, especially for schools in minority areas. In fact, the entire structure of society would have to be transformed. It would mean, at a minimum, competitive pay for teachers and stipends and decent jobs for high school and college students so that they can afford the time to study.

#### REAL CHANGES NEEDED

It would also mean changing the function of education under capitalism. The real job of the schools now is to give working-class kids enough training to understand and carry out the orders of their bosses — not to prepare them for higher education, for rewarding and productive work, or to think for themselves about the world they have to face.

If the CUNY administrators really intend to transform standards, they would have to undertake an all-out campaign to reverse the cutbacks and win more funds for education on all levels. That means denouncing, not cajoling, Wall Street, Cuomo & Co. as the enemies of education and of working people they are. Without this, the proposal is nothing but an academic cover for the anti-working class cuts — a greater fraud even than Open Admissions today.

The Cuomo-Reynolds plan is to make CUNY a smaller, elite institution that no longer even pretends to serve the racially and ethnically mixed working-class population of New York. Defending CUNY should be a top concern of the workers' struggle. The job cannot be left to the administrators and union hacks whose dedication is to capitalism and its profits, not the working class. ●

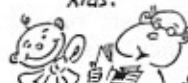
#### A FAIRY TALE FOR KIDS

Once upon a time the Good Emperor got mad at the Godawful Grinch of the Gulf for invading the Enclave of the Emir & for scaring the King of the

Land of Sand, who was in his counting house, counting his wives. The Emperor sent his flying dragons who burnt the Grinch's Land, killing & starving hundreds of thousands

of Serfs. And to teach Grinch a lesson he helped him kill & starve the Serfs his dragons missed. And they all lived happily ever after (except the Serfs who don't count).

The moral is: Believe in God & Country, work hard & become a Statesman. Good pay & safe. And you get to kill lots of other kids.



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# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Spring 1991

## New York Workers Face More Pain

"Share the Pain." That's the pathetic slogan New York's union leaders and black and Latin politicians came up with to inspire the March 19 Albany protest against Governor Mario Cuomo's wholesale budget cuts in vital public services.

Cuomo and New York City Mayor David Dinkins are consolidating a united front with the financial establishment to impose deeper cuts, massive layoffs and new taxes on working people. At the same time, they demand that public workers give back the piddling wage gains won a few months ago. This is their reward to the unions and black and Latin voters who gave Dinkins and Cuomo decisive support in their recent election victories.

The attacks on the working class continue. As we write, State Assembly Speaker Mel Miller has introduced an income tax hike that clobbers working people while claiming to hit the rich. And Dinkins and Cuomo have threatened further sweeping cuts if the unions don't agree to slash existing contract benefits further.

While Stanley Hill, head of the municipal workers' District Council 37, has called the mayor's current proposal unacceptable, he and his sidekick, Barry Feinstein of the Teamsters, have promised that they are ready to deal. "It is silly and stupid not to work together," said Hill.

### WHO'S THE 'LIAR'?

In early March, a tell-tale squabble blew up between Feinstein and Hill on the one side, and members of Dinkins' administration on the other. It began when Budget Director Philip Michael told Wall Street that the city would demand a deferral of the wage gains DC 37 and the teamsters settled for last winter. (See our last issue for a detailed analysis.) "Negotiations on this issue have already begun," Michael wrote.

Hill and Feinstein were furious when this became public: it clearly signified that they were again selling out their members behind their backs. They called Michael a liar. Feinstein suggested the union leaders had been "stabbed in the back." Hill added that Dinkins administration "stinks from the head." Labor Relations Commissioner Eric Schmertz, a supposed union advocate in the Dinkins camp, sided with Hill and Feinstein, stating that Michael had "misconstrued and miscast" what Schmertz had told him.

But then Michael produced a memo from Schmertz that read, "I suggest you tell the rating agencies that deferral plans are and will be part of our negotiations." Thus

refuted, Schmertz, who had been pilloried by politicians and businessmen for agreeing to the 5.5 percent increase won last fall by the teachers' union, was forced to resign.

That left Hill and Feinstein hanging out to dry, exposed for their behind-the-scenes discussions over wage deferrals. To save face, they demanded once again that the city treat them with respect. "If they don't do this, there will be confrontation, that's inevitable," said the embarrassed Hill. Given his record, this is nothing but hot air.

Behind the union leaders' posturing against Dinkins & Co. are real problems the labor leaders have no answer for: the governmental debt and revenue crises intensified by the capitalist recession. And so the unions continue to back



Workers rally in Albany against Cutback Cuomo. Voting for Democrats is very democratic: workers elect their very own executioners.

these capitalist politicians they call "friends of labor."

For example, black and Latin legislators and the New York labor leadership sponsored a mass rally at the capitol in Albany on March 19 against the state budget cuts. Despite Dinkins' own escalating cuts and his amply proved devotion to Wall Street, not workers, he was invited to speak. He declined so as not to antagonize Cuomo, but it was a stab in the backs of workers to pretend he is their ally.

Another example of feeding the hand that bites you: Hill, Feinstein, Sandra Feldman of the teachers' union and Dennis Rivera of the hospital workers' Local 1199 all contributed \$10,000 or more to Dinkins' fund-raising dinner for his 1993 re-election. "Schizophrenia," Feinstein explained. No, not split personality. Just two-faced.

### 'TAX THE RICH'

When workers protest, as tens of thousands did on March 19, officials say there is no money. True, government

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*Patriotic Greetings*  
to the  
*Leaders of the 'Left':*

*To those who Supported the Gulf War  
and can Celebrate the Incineration of Hundreds of Thousands;*

*To those who Preferred to "Let the Sanctions Work"  
and can Therefore Exult in the Starvation and Disease Afflicting Millions;*

*To those who Refused to Defend Iraq against Imperialism  
and Firmly Stayed Neutral in the Face of Near-Apocalyptic Human Slaughter;*

*To those who Declined to Criticize Saddam Hussein  
and can now Take Pride in his Renewed Alliance with Our President.*

*Congratulations to All.*

*You Are Awarded the Bloodstained Yellow Ribbon,  
Official Symbol of the Brave New World Order  
Which You Have Helped So Many to Experience.*

League for the Revolutionary Party

April 6, 1991

LRP Forum on the Gulf War Wash.Sq.Meth.Church, 135 West 4th St.

170 Broadway, Room 201, New York, NY 10038

Labor Donated

Friday, May 10, 7:30 pm