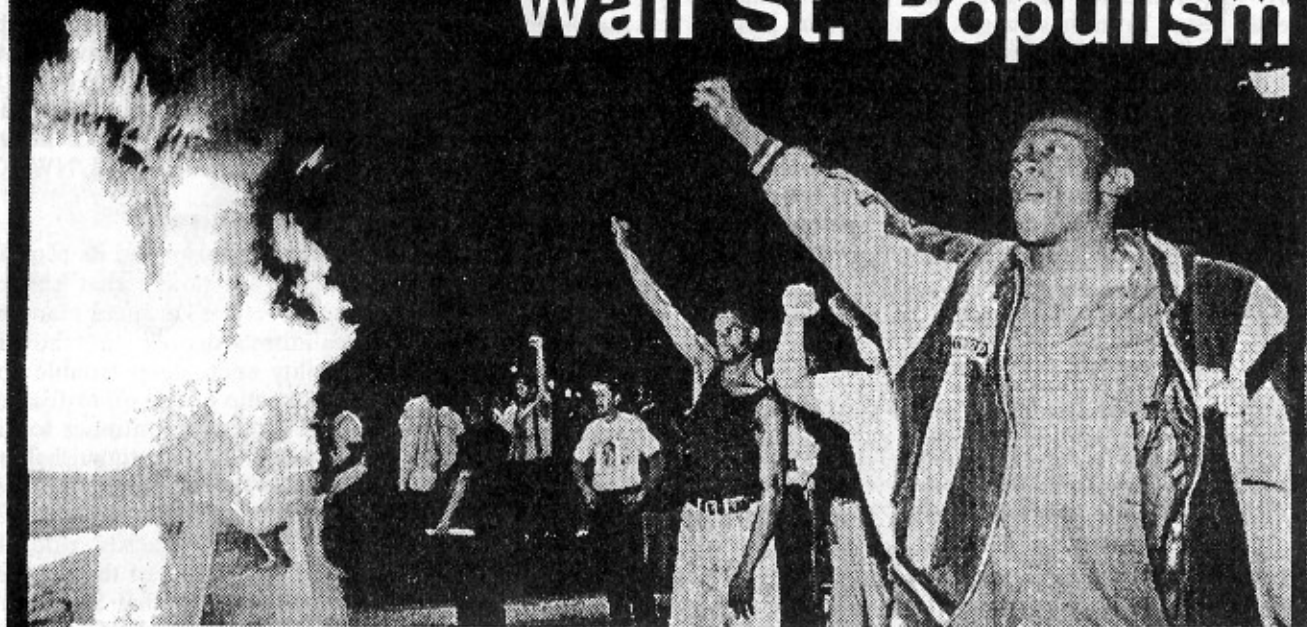




Re-Create
the Fourth International

Published by the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Clinton's Solution: Wall St. Populism



The Fire Next Time: Los Angeles riot demanded an alternative to a rotten system. Instead, it scared Wall Street to move from Bush to phony populist Clinton. Mass anger will flare up at him too.

U.S. capitalism is out of control. This was Bill Clinton's message in the economic program he put forward in February to tackle the economic crisis that had won him the election: the skyrocketing federal deficit, smoldering working-class discontent over unemployment and declining real wages, and the long-term decline of American industrial power. After twelve years of Reagan and Bush's voodoo economics, Clinton had promised the bourgeoisie an honest alternative. Yet despite all the rhetoric about hard choices, his program was relatively cautious and conservative.

Like an addict in denial, Clinton peddles false hopes that a few reforms can bring the situation under control. His tax hikes and spending cuts barely dent the deficit that the bour-

geoisie is so concerned about, much less deflate the burgeoning national debt. His piddling economic "stimulus" will do little to strengthen U.S. capitalism against its rivals.

Of course, Clintonomics will not shrink the army of unemployed and low-paid workers that has become a permanent fixture. His program, particularly the energy tax and Medicare cuts, will hurt workers. He had to refrain from stronger attacks when it became clear that people would not accept outrages like capping Social Security benefits. Thus he will slash working-class income, but not enough to raise profits significantly, a necessity if U.S. capitalism is to get back on its feet.

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LRP and COFI Report

The collapse of Stalinism, far from signalling the world-historical triumph of capitalism, has removed a central prop to the stability of imperialism. This has led not only to the well publicized epidemic of nationalist wars; it has also raised the tempo of class struggle around the world, a fact barely mentioned by bourgeois media in the U.S. Mass strikes have shaken the ruling classes of Italy, Germany, Greece, South Africa and Australia. And despite the present surface quiet, far greater upheavals will soon come in the U.S.

In this changing situation, the Communist Organization for the Fourth International (COFI) has made major strides since its founding in early 1992. This Report is a new feature of our magazine designed to make our national and international activities more accessible to class-conscious workers.

Proletarian Revolution is not just a discussion magazine but a political weapon. This issue's article on Australia is particularly important: for the first time, our program has been directly tested in mass struggle. The Workers Revolution Group was the only organization in Australia to fight for a general strike to defend against an historic attack by the ruling capitalists. The WRG fought the counterrevolutionary trade union bureaucrats and waged a propaganda campaign for revolutionary leadership of the ongoing struggle.

Our Swedish section, the Förbundet för ett Revolutionärt Parti (FRP), will soon publish the first issue of its paper *Röda Arbetet*, along with an English-language supplement,



Workers of the world, unite!

RED LABOR International

English language supplement to RÖDA ARBETET, organ of the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (FRP)
- Swedish Section of the COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL (COFI)

Red Labor International. (For information on subscriptions and individual copies, see our publications page.) The FRP has also translated our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism*; the Swedish-language edition will be available shortly.

In the U.S., the LRP has stepped up its activity at the

Articles from Back Issues

- No. 1: The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party
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- No. 4: The Spartacist League and the USSR
- No. 8: Transitional Program: Myth vs. Reality
- No. 9: Marxism and Military Policy; Afghanistan
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- No.42: Depression Election; Abortion Rights

Write for a complete list.

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City University of New York, an institution of 200,000 working-class students. An article in this issue reports on our fight against a major cutback program being proposed for CUNY with ugly racist implications. We have also held a series of successful meetings on topics such as the revolutionary struggle in South Africa and the U.S. elections.

Last fall, LRPers attended conferences of the Labor Party Advocates group (see p. 14) and of the November conference of the National Women's Rights Organizing Committee. The NWROC conference was led by the Revolutionary Workers League, a group that pushes a left-sounding but non-revolutionary program. The LRP stressed the need to build an explicitly revolutionary working-class party as the only answer to the oppression of women, gays and Blacks. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 42 for details on NWROC and our analysis of the abortion rights struggle.)

NWROC attracts militants genuinely dedicated to fighting the deepening sexist and racist attacks. Many are open to the revolutionary program but are not yet convinced that it must be in the forefront while working to unite larger forces in direct action. We look forward to future actions with them and further discussions on the vital difference between a clear revolutionary approach and that of RWL/NWROC.

PSEUDO-TROTSKYIST CONFUSION

The inherent weakness of Stalinism and its centrality in reinforcing world imperialism are points that can be explained only through the theoretical advances made by our tendency. In contrast, Stalinism's demise and the slide of social democracy into senility spell deep trouble for the pseudo-Trotskyists feeding off one or the other (or both).

The Mandeliste United Secretariat continues to disintegrate, with whole sections becoming indistinguishable from capitalism's loyal reformist left. The Morenoite LIT has not only split several times in recent years; the residue is divided into at least six tendencies. The Spartacists, riddled with cynicism and absorbed by contemplation of their real estate, have lost any reason for existence now that Stalinism is no longer available for them to defend. The LRCI, in contrast, is befuddled by its inability to defend the "moribund workers' states" whose existence it still insists on.

Covering some of these developments has forced us to postpone the second part of our reply to the review of *The Life and Death of Stalinism* by Geoff Pilling of the British WRP. (The first part is in our previous issue.) This review exemplified the inability of pseudo-Trotskyist "orthodoxy" to come to grips with the reality of Stalinism and capitalism.

The decimation of so many varieties of centrism helps clear the air for the resurrection of authentic Trotskyism. But it would have been far better and more decisive had it been accomplished through mass victories of the working class. ●

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Clinton Bushwhacks Haitians

As William Jefferson Clinton neared his gala installation as President of the United States and Leader of the Imperial World, one small cloud threatened to darken the glitter:

In the last two weeks, members of Mr. Clinton's foreign policy team have expressed concern that celebrations surrounding Mr. Clinton's inauguration, which will be widely televised, will be marred by news footage of Haitian boat people drowning in stormy waters while trying to make the 600-mile journey to the Florida coast. (*New York Times*, Jan. 15.)

How inconvenient. Just imagine, to have spent multi-

received two-thirds of the popular vote, is restored to office. But Secretary of State Christopher was already backtracking before the new administration was sworn in:

There is no question in my mind that because of the election, he [Aristide] has to be part of the solution. I don't have a precise system worked out in my mind as to how he would be part of the solution, but certainly he cannot be ignored in the matter. (*Times*, Jan. 15.)

How very sporting of our "democratic" diplomat, not to ignore the overwhelming vote of the Haitian people. Still, under the semblance of acceding to the masses' will, the new



Miami: Angry thousands march to protest U.S. complicity in killings of Haitian refugees.

millions of dollars on festivities portraying Bill and Hillary as the Second Coming of Jack and Jacqueline Kennedy, and then have the affair ruined. Boatloads of Haitians, selfishly obsessed with escaping from hunger and repression, might die — thus upstaging their betters. In prime time, too.

If any boat people had actually drowned, the new president's policy would have been exposed from the start as an outright fraud. After all, in his campaign effort to firm up Black votes, Clinton had condemned Bush for his "cruel policy of returning Haitian refugees to a brutal dictatorship without an asylum hearing." Because of such comments, after Clinton's victory tens of thousands of desperate Haitians were planning to risk a dangerous voyage in overcrowded, rickety boats to escape their murderous regime.

SAVING THE OPPRESSORS

But on January 14th the president-elect announced that he would continue Bush's policy: forcibly returning escapees to the embrace of rulers who have already killed over 3000 people since seizing power in September 1991 — a flagrantly illegal policy even under bourgeois international law. Clinton asked the Coast Guard and Navy to step up their patrol of international waters.

Clinton had promised asylum to the Haitian escapees "until we restored the elected government of Haiti" — that is, until the Rev. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the president who

administration must not only conclude a deal with the military usurpers, it must strengthen them.

Aristide was supported by the people because of his populist rhetoric. In office his deeds were hardly revolutionary, but the mass aspirations he seemed to embody terrified Haiti's comprador bourgeoisie. When General Cédras seized power, Aristide, unwilling to call the masses into motion, fled into Washington's arms seeking restoration.

Clinton will enforce his "temporary" naval Berlin Wall until the deal now being negotiated with the Haitian military is finalized. Then he will undoubtedly declare that emigration to the U.S. for either economic or political reasons will no longer be necessary. So Haitians will still be excluded, this time with a fig leaf of legality.

Whatever face-saving agreement is finally worked out between Aristide and Cédras, the new government will be a facade for military-comprador rule. The problem is not the military's repression of the masses but the reverse:

While much of the public attention toward the political crisis in Haiti has been focused on the army's repression of Haitians, especially supporters of the exiled President, Administration officials said they felt that a peaceful restoration of . . . Aristide to the presidency can occur only if members of the military can be assured they will not fall victim to violent mobs seeking retribution. (*Times*, Jan. 28.)

To safeguard the cowering military butchers, the situation will have to become even worse for the masses:

Buying off the ramshackle 8,000-man army, officially to "professionalize" it, would be far easier and cheaper than housing boat people and would give President Clinton an early foreign policy victory. (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, Jan. 24.)

Thus the "solution" that President Aristide will be allowed to be "part of" is to strengthen the military oppressors, who might otherwise face the wrath of the masses.

The Haitian problem is just one sign that Clinton's foreign policy, aimed supposedly at promoting human rights, is a lie. The present White House, in contrast to Bush's, is committed only to using populist demagoguery — not to any democratic substance. Imperialism remains imperialism.

Clinton

continued from page 1

Why does his program go only part way, after the big campaign build-up? Wall Street capitalists understand that the real answer for them is to smash the working class and impose drastic cuts in social programs and the living standards. In the long run, they can only solve their crisis the way international capitalism did in the 1930's: depression, war, and fascist counterrevolution.

But they are not yet prepared to frontally assault the working class to dish out the austerity Clinton only hints at. Last year's explosion in Los Angeles and other cities was a powerful reminder that pushing working people too hard involves great risks. The capitalists still hope to avoid the shock to their system that strong medicine entails.

Rather than hitting workers with the full dose of austerity, Clinton therefore intends to phase in the attacks piece by piece. The program so far is only the beginning. Hillary Clinton is in charge of phase two, the health care package which promises to force most working people to pay more and get even less. And worse will come.

CLINTON'S BOURGEOIS TASKS

Clinton's primary task is to organize the badly divided and indecisive ruling class. The capitalists desperately need leadership that Bush could not provide. Clinton's strength is an ingrained opportunism — combined with an ability to change directions to meet the needs of the bourgeoisie while staying tuned to the moods of the workers. Unlike Bush, Clinton knows how to shift ground and sound convincing in order to sell ruling-class policies.

That's why, despite his program's cautiousness, pundits are proclaiming how bold it is. From the ruling-class vantage point, after the Pollyanna presidencies of Reagan and Bush, Clinton appears daring for stating that the system is in deep trouble. Working people too are saying they're glad something is finally being done: things are so desperate that they are willing to "share" in the sacrifice necessary to get the economy moving.

In crediting Clinton with boldness, the bourgeoisie reveals its admiration for the ease with which he lies and breaks promises. Lying is a fundamental requisite for any president, as Bush showed with his famous "no new taxes" pledge in 1988. But while Bush fumbled, Clinton displays the ease of a pathological liar. He has already stabbed Haitian

For the handful of radicals who don't buy bourgeois snake oil, that is not news. But many oppressed people around the world hope against hope that the U.S. will carry out its promises; they see no alternative. The mockery of their trust is already written in the blood of Haitians and Bosnians.

The Haitian problem is also testimony to Clinton's duplicity at home. His policy continues Bush's favoritism towards white emigrés over Black Haitians. The American admiral who referred to Clinton's tightened naval blockade as a "white picket fence" was being more truthful than he wanted to be. Racism abroad reflects the unremitting racism at home: "Blacks need not apply!"

The German workers tore down the Berlin Wall. Haitian and U.S. workers must destroy this new barricade as well. ●

Total Federal Taxes including social security and Medicare (Source: <i>Fortune</i> magazine.)			
Annual income:	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$200,000
U.S. 1980	\$10,841	\$31,638	\$81,589
U.S. today	\$8,070	\$18,277	\$43,904
Under Clinton	no change	no change	\$45,241
Germany	\$12,970	\$29,450	\$77,846
Britain	\$14,167	\$34,167	\$74,167
Japan	\$7,987	\$22,271	\$70,929

refugees in the back; he has dropped some food on Bosnia to cover for his campaign promises; now he admits that his pledges to the "middle class" were a sham too.

Fortunately for Clinton, contempt for politicians is so great that he benefits from the cynicism that accepts dishonesty as politics as usual. He makes his lying sound good. Thus he covers spending cuts that continue Reagan's attacks on the working class with populist rhetoric calling on the wealthy to pay. In reality, after all their "sacrifice," the bourgeoisie will still be paying lower tax rates than before Reagan. *Fortune* magazine (no enemy of U.S. capitalists), points out that "for rich Americans the soaking was worse 13 years ago, and wealthy foreigners still pay more taxes."

The bourgeoisie appreciates Clinton's gamesmanship. William Kristol, Dan Quayle's former chief of staff, noted how cynical Clinton's "class-warfare rhetoric" is. "He doesn't really believe in this rhetoric. He has a Cabinet full of lawyer millionaires." The Republicans complain that they couldn't get away with lying and backstabbing the way Clinton does.

Since he can play this populist card, "Slick Willie" is a more dangerous enemy for the working class than Bush. (Note how the bourgeois press has stopped using this once-common nickname.) Nevertheless, this weasel is far from proving that he can lead the rulers out of their current fix. For all his slickness, he showed a propensity to shoot himself in the foot during the primaries and general election; he won because of the deficiencies of his opponents. His main virtue, his opportunism and lack of principles, can easily become a liability once working people see through him.

The bourgeoisie's crisis of leadership is mirrored inside

the working class. If the bourgeois leaders are reluctant to engage in all-out conflict with the workers, what passes for a working-class leadership, Lane Kirkland and the AFL-CIO honchos, are downright craven in their desire to capitulate to their capitalist bosses without a struggle. They endorsed Clinton's calls for sacrifice from the working class.

With millions of workers unemployed, the bureaucrats sell out the workers for some cheap promises of a few jobs. They accept that paying off the debt owed to capital comes before the basic survival of working people. Clinton is able to deceive workers because he doesn't face any serious opposition that tells the truth about his program. These ruling-class lackeys are happy to sacrifice the interests of workers to preserve their feeding places at the capitalist trough.

NEEDED: A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Much of what passes for a left voted for Clinton as the lesser evil. They bear responsibility for whatever slowdown in working-class resistance is generated by the illusions they help create. And they are still trying to clutch Clinton's coat.

The Committees of Correspondence group chides labor leaders for boasting of their "access" to the White House while ignoring Clinton's anti-union record. But they go on:

Certainly, the left sees Clinton's victory as hugely significant, a milestone defeat for the right wing. It brings an end to a grueling decade of repressive austerity policies . . . (Corresponder, January 1993.)

The illusion that Clinton will end austerity for workers rests on the notion that there exists a progressive sector of U.S. capitalism, dedicated not to exploitation but to growth and jobs in order to beat Germany and Japan. To reinforce this sector, the CofC suggests pressure tactics on Clinton, including postcards, mass rallying and lobbying. Unfortunately, the union tops have ruled out mass pressure so as not to annoy their new friend in the White House. As for sending postcards, they're a cheaper waste of effort than phone calls. In times of austerity, that's not to be sneered at.

Even after Clinton's economic address, leftists still signed on to his program. The "progressive" economist David Gordon wrote in the *Nation* that "There is much in Clintonomics . . . we can enthusiastically support." He lists the decision to "change the economy's course," "the Administration's determination to present the government as part of the solution, not part of the problem" and many of Clinton's "new investments" in superstructural public works.

This amounts to cheerleading for both pitifully inadequate measures and for anti-working class attacks. It also spreads the myth that a capitalist government can be "part of the solution" for the working class.

John Judis in *In These Times* was worse. He declared that Clinton's meager array of taxes on corporations and the rich "put the Democrats back on the side of Main Street" — meaning ordinary people as opposed to Wall Street.

Clearly the working class needs a different leadership. But a leadership that tells the truth about Clinton and the state of the economy and society can only be one not committed to the defense of capitalism: a proletarian revolutionary party.

A revolutionary party would expose the bourgeoisie's attempt to make the working class pay for the capitalist crisis. It would expose the lie that sacrifice by the workers will save jobs. This was what workers were told during the 1980's when union after union traded concessions for jobs. Instead, the corporations took the money and ran, leaving workers with nothing to show for their sacrifices. War spending, speculation and imperialist exploitation of the poor

countries were the main economic results.

On the financial front, a revolutionary party would denounce Clinton's deficit reduction program as an attempt to prop up profits by squeezing more out of the working class. It would demand the repudiation of the national debt and the stoppage of interest payments, except that portion that funds workers' health and retirement benefits. The banks and financial manipulators got us into the crisis and pigged out at the trough for years; let *them* pay for their greed and corruption. To the objection that the capitalist banks and corporations cannot afford this solution, we reply that we can no longer afford their existence. We demand the expropriation of the banks and corporations.

A revolutionary party would recognize that there is no future for workers under capitalism. In power, it would create jobs by organizing a sliding scale of hours that shares the available work among all workers. That means a shorter work week and good pay for all. Instead of Clinton's piddling package it would promote massive public works programs.

It is possible to carry out measures like this today. But the capitalist rulers will not sacrifice their wealth for the good of humanity. That is why the working class must take power and create a workers' state. This is the decisive plank in the platform of a genuine revolutionary party. Today's industry and technology has the potential to feed, clothe and shelter all of humanity, once production for profit gives way to production for human use.

Socialist revolution is the only solution to the crisis of decaying capitalism. Clinton's piecemeal steps toward re-directing the economy toward competition with Germany and Japan translate into even greater future demands on beleaguered workers. Capitalist competition always deepens exploitation — it will also produce World War III if not stopped. The time to build the revolutionary party is now. ●

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

The current history of *Revolutionary History* is an intensive study of the activities of the Trotskyist movement during the Bolivian revolution of 1952, with articles by Pierre Broué, Guillermo Lora, Liborio Justo, José Villa and others.

The next issue will be a study of the Trotskyist movement in South Africa; it is being assembled under the guidance of the noted South African revolutionary and scholar, Baruch Hirson.

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Australian Crisis: Labor and Left on Trial

by Matthew Richardson

Australian capitalism has entered an acute crisis. While the U.S. and British bourgeoisies defended their profits in the 1980's by means of Reagan and Thatcher's attacks on the working class, the Australian bourgeoisie spent the decade hiding from direct confrontations. It carried out a policy of more gradual austerity through the Labor Party government.

Now the Australians need to catch up to their imperialist partners by launching an offensive against the working class. But they need a qualitatively higher offensive than Reagan and Thatcher did, not just attacks against weaker sectors of the class. Last fall a frontal assault was launched, which Australia's union bureaucrats labelled "the most important battle that the trade union movement has ever faced."

In Melbourne, the Liberal Party government of the state of Victoria declared an intensified class war, turning to the weapons of mass unemployment, wage cuts, bans on the right to strike and organize, and racism. In response, workers repeatedly strove for their instinctive weapon of class self-defense, the general strike. But, every time, they were repulsed by their misleaders in the unions and Labor Party.

Like every decisive development in the class struggle, the Australian events have put to the test all those contending for working-class leadership — from union bureaucrats through left reformists to far-left tendencies, including our comrades in the Workers Revolution Group. The lessons we can draw are critical for class-conscious workers everywhere.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

For the past decade, the Australian workers' movement has been controlled by "the Accord," a class-collaborationist social contract introduced by Labor leader Bob Hawke, former head of the Australian Congress of Trade Unions (ACTU). (See "Class Struggle in the 'Lucky Country,'" *PR* No. 32.) Over that time the Accord had slashed workers' wages by a minimum of 30 percent and has whittled away much of the working class's fighting capacity.

The anti-worker role of the Accord expresses the historical nature of the Labor Party. It is a party of workers, but its bourgeois leadership and program are definitively counter-revolutionary; it is a blight on the workers' struggle. Its contradictory nature lies in the fact that it is based on the labor aristocracy — the layer of skilled workers and artisans who feel they have a strong stake in capitalism — and their political expression, the union bureaucracy.

This bureaucracy turns the workers' historic gains against them, turns the Labor Party into a party of imperialism and turns its unions into vehicles for capitalist austerity. Since its founding, the Labor Party has acted to block the working class from coming to revolutionary consciousness. It has been the central prop of capitalist rule, saving the bosses at every decisive moment. (For a full analysis of Labor's history, see our Australian journal, *Workers Revolution* No. 17-18.)

But despite success with the Accord, profits continued to fall. The Australian bourgeoisie found itself left behind in competition with other economies. Instead of sucking in an industrial base from overseas investments, Labor sucked into the economy the crisis of U.S. and Japanese industry.

Over 300,000 jobs (30 percent of the total) in basic industry were destroyed, driving manufacturing back to its 1952 level. Of five car manufacturers established in the 1970's, at most three will remain by 1994, operating at depressed levels. Between 1988 and mid-1991, no less than 5000 factories — 11 percent of all industry — were closed.

Between 1990 and mid-1992, 1300 jobs were lost every week!

Unable to finance their operations from their own profits, the bourgeoisie turned to loans. Its A\$8 billion foreign debt of 1980 exploded to A\$183 billion by the end of 1991. Having built its imperialism on the thin base of farming and mining, Australian imperialism now sustains itself on hope.

THE NEW ZEALAND MODEL

The Australian bourgeoisie found its inspiration in the recent defeat of New Zealand's working class. New Zealand has a small economy tied to Australia's by a thousand threads. Since its imperialist status is even flimsier than Australia's, its profits fell earlier and more precipitously. The 1980's was a decade of hesitations and zigzags for its bourgeoisie, unable to find a consistent path in the class struggle.

The Labour Party, which replaced the Conservatives in the early 1980's, attempted to implement an austerity program of economic deregulation and privatization that would open the backward economy to the discipline of the world market. The workers responded with mass strikes and protests. With economic crisis crashing upon it from one side, and working-class rebellion on the other, Labour began to crack. Two leadership changes tried to move Labour further rightward to keep up with the bourgeois attacks, but this failed and the party disintegrated.

After sweeping to power, the National Party delivered on its promise to attack the working class. The centerpiece of its strategy was the Employment Contracts Act (ECA), which ended closed-shop union representation and placed workers on individual contracts with their bosses, enabling huge cuts in wages and working conditions. The workers rose in struggle against the ECA and pressed toward a general strike. But in the end, the Stalinist and Labour bureaucrats who ran the unions sabotaged the strike, scaling it down to a one-day protest, in an effort to establish a role for themselves in contract talks. (For details, see *Workers Revolution* No. 15.)

LABOR VS. LIBERALS

The most aggressive sections of the Australian bourgeoisie, impressed by the ease with which the New Zealand workers were defeated (that is, by the swiftness of the union bureaucrats' capitulation), moved vigorously to apply "the New Zealand experience" to Australia. The bourgeois media began discussing the desirability of an offensive against "the power of the trade unions." The Liberal Party (comparable to the British Conservatives) quickly changed leaders and adopted a program of union busting and austerity modeled on New Zealand. Seeking to outflank the Liberals from the right, the Labor Party ousted old union man Hawke as Prime Minister in favor of the free-market economist Paul Keating.

There followed a battle between Labor and Liberal over who would win the bourgeoisie's support. The Liberals said it was time to discard the union bureaucracy and deal real blows to the trade unions. Labor argued that indeed a drastic increase in exploitation — through wage cuts, speed-up and mass unemployment — was necessary, but the only way to do so and avoid massive social upheaval would be to use the trade union bureaucracy to stifle the workers.

Meanwhile, the aggressive bosses were becoming impatient, anxious to implement decisive blows against the workers. A test of the two parties' competing strategies came in mid-1992, in a four-month strike at the Associated Pulp and Paper Manufacturers (APPM) factory in the island state of Tasmania. The APPM struggle immediately became the

axis around which all political forces moved.

When the APPM management opened a vicious attack on its workers, slashing wages and working conditions without negotiating with the unions, the 1100-strong workforce immediately struck. Workers throughout Tasmania and on mainland Australia demanded solidarity strikes. Immediately the entire union bureaucracy was mobilized to contain the strike to the one plant and negotiate a deal.

The aim of the ACTU's intervention was to give the bosses the measures they desired while maintaining the

demand. APPM accepted, so ACTU won its showcase.

This was a bitter defeat for the whole working class but a victory for the bureaucracy and its Labor Party. The fact that the leaders of the unions can win a victory when the members lose illustrates the class differences between them. More and more, the union bureaucracy can only find a place in crisis-ridden capitalism on the bones of workers' defeat.

But this cannot be an infinite process. The intensifying crisis of capitalism increasingly demands the removal of trade unions. No matter how much they are used against workers,



Melbourne, Australia: Bourgeois press notes role of Workers Revolution Group in workers' rally.

bureaucracy's own role in the process. The message to the ruling class, again, was that only with the union bureaucracy controlling the workers can you successfully implement the attacks you need. As ACTU president Martin Ferguson noted, the unions wanted to "talk through the issues for a return to work and huge improvements in workplace efficiency." He wanted a "showcase for enterprise bargaining."

The Liberals refused to support APPM boss Peter Wade, fearing that if the working class nationwide were to hear about their program through the example of one factory, the struggle against the "New Zealand solution" would be uncontrollable. As a prominent Liberal leader explained:

While Peter Wade's cause is noble, he's gone the wrong way about it. The unions' grip on this country can't be broken starting in one town and going to another. . . .

It's all or nothing. If you like, we're for a "big bang" in industrial relations, like we saw in New Zealand.

Having isolated the strike, the ACTU offered APPM a deal to "restructure" their operations: the work week could be extended from 35 hours to 40 hours (two more than APPM had wanted!) with twelve-hour shifts, wages could be cut by 25 percent, and workers could be forced to train scabs in the operation of all essential machinery, as APPM had

they remain a restriction on the bosses' ability to exploit the working class as they see fit. Moreover, betrayals by the unions facilitate a weakening of the working class's fighting capacity; they enable the future smashing of the unions. Thus Labor paved the way for the Liberals' union-busting plan.

REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

Because the attacks on the working class stem not just from a conjunctural crisis but fundamentally from the historic decay of capitalism, the immediate defense of our class's interests can only be led successfully by a revolutionary party. The task of communists is to win the mass of workers away from their misleaders and to the socialist program. To do this, the revolutionaries must put to the test the illusions that workers have in their leaders.

Indispensable for this task is the united front tactic. Communists use this tactic to prove to their fellow workers through common struggle that their present leaders will always compromise their interests in order to preserve capitalism. They must therefore be replaced by revolutionaries having no commitment to the bosses' system and who therefore seek to show other workers that the proletariat needs to overthrow capitalism.

The APPM struggle showed that while the working class had been severely weakened by the decade of Labor rule, it was not smashed. Alert to the betrayals of the union tops and to the weakened state of their class, workers shied away from individual strikes, given the danger of isolation. Conscious of the overall crisis, they were wary of sectoral struggles. With varying degrees of consciousness, they sensed the need to unite the whole class against the gathering offensive.

This understanding was essential to the Workers Revolution Group's preparation for the looming mass struggles. Seeing that workers were leaning towards *defensive* mobilizations of the whole class, the WRG actively popularized, among the most advanced workers, the idea of a general strike, pointing to the necessity for the quickest broadening of all isolated strikes into generalized strike action, and agitating for it where possible.

Moreover, the WRG did not hide its additional reason for urging a general strike: to raise the *revolutionary* consciousness of the workers. Communists are not simply the "best union militants" who fight hardest for reforms. We also seek to convince workers of the need for socialist revolution. To this end, the general strike shows our class its own power to transform society.

VICTORIA: 'THE BIG BANG'

In October 1992, elections were held in Victoria, the heartland of Australian industry and the state most debilitated by the economic crisis. Victoria's ten-year Labor government was financially bankrupt and politically moribund. Its Liberal opposition was baying for the chance to "end the power the unions have over the State."

The Liberals won the election in a landslide and immediately declared war on the working class. An Employee Relations Bill (ERB), duplicating New Zealand's ECA, was rushed to the legislature. It ended compulsory unionism and imposed individual contracts on workers. Historic agreements between the unions and bosses over wage levels and working conditions were to be destroyed in favor of "agreements" between huge monopoly companies and isolated workers. In addition, the Liberals moved to impose no-strike agreements on all contracts, the immediate destruction of over 30,000 jobs through privatization of state-owned industries, the end of all industry-wide agreements aside from legal minimums, and a 25 percent speed-up of all work.

These attacks were not designed to destroy the union movement. Only an armed fascist mobilization could achieve this, and the Liberals are not fascists. They do aim to deepen

exploitation by crippling the unions generally and smashing key regional unions. Market austerity, guaranteed by the armed force of the state, is to be the Liberals' central pillar of rule, with the union bureaucrats an additional prop.

The union bureaucracy was thus dealt a fundamental challenge. The Liberal attacks threatened to undermine their power as brokers of the working class's labor-power. If the Liberals won the battle for Victoria, they would be better placed to defeat Labor at the next federal election and deny the bureaucrats their access to state power. So the Victorian unions' peak body, the Trades Hall Council (VTHC), called a protest rally for November 10, in the hope that by threatening to mobilize they could force the Liberals to negotiate. They even warned that they could organize a general strike.

Over and over, however, the bureaucrats offered to cancel all action if the Liberals would agree to deal. "We would work very energetically and co-operatively with the government," said VTHC leader John Halfpenny. The Liberals refused — so the VTHC moved to call off the demonstration! But the working class was in no mood to cooperate in its own defeat. Pressure for a fight made the cancellation impossible. Many pushed to carry out the unions' empty threat to turn the protest into a one-day general strike.

Indeed, the workers turned the November 10 rally into a partial general strike. According to the VTHC, all workers on state awards (agreements between unions and state employers, as opposed to federal awards) were to strike in protest. Halfpenny calculated that talk of a mass strike would be enough to release much of the pressure from the workers; he expected only 30,000 to attend.

THE NOVEMBER 10 UPSURGE

But the workers showed that they were ready for a real fight against the bosses: 800,000 struck and over 150,000 attended the demonstration at the chambers of the state government, Parliament House in Melbourne. This confirmed the WRG's understanding that while workers might not mobilize around partial struggles, they would eagerly respond to the possibility of an all-out fight.

The union bureaucrats were intimidated by the number of workers and absolutely terrified by the demonstration's militancy. At the front, they raised a banner desecrating the class-struggle slogan "United We Stand!" — replacing it with "United We Bargain, Divided We Beg." But the mass of workers had not come to bargain with the Liberals. A few thousand workers throughout the crowd called on it to "storm Parliament House!" Thousands also enthusiastically



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greeted the WRG's leaflet demanding that the union tops call an indefinite general strike against the ERB.

In an attempt to defuse the volatile situation, at the moment when the front of the rally reached Parliament House (when most of the rally was still at its starting point), Halfpenny abruptly told the assembly that the rally was over — they should all go home. He was clearly shaken when several thousand metal and municipal workers roared back, "We want to stay!"

WRG members took the opportunity to take part in an impromptu rally of the workers. Our comrades got overwhelmingly positive responses, not only for their warnings of the bureaucrats' sabotage of the struggle and for the demand of a general strike, but also for our propaganda for the revolutionary party and socialist revolution.

On the other hand, a member of the centrist Interna-

power workers were to lose their jobs, and another 60 schools and 25 hospitals were to be closed.

Having promised strike action in the case of any more attacks, the union tops now refused to call a single strike. Instead, the leaders of the Trades Hall Council, who had to this point been at the head of the movement, moved to hand control of the "campaign" to the national ACTU. They hoped that this would ease the pressure from the workers.

ACTU then promised a national day of action for November 30. Predictably, however, this was a fraud designed to further the demobilization of the workers. Rallies and marches in Melbourne were organized for individual unions only. All day long, thousands of workers demonstrated in front of Parliament House, only to be rushed away by the union tops and then replaced by another isolated union.

Workers across Australia who struck in support of the



Massive outpouring of Australian workers frightened bourgeoisie and bureaucrats.

tional Socialist Organization (ISO) tried to cover for the bureaucrats; he condemned our comrades for criticizing them, calling it "fantastic" that the unions had organized the rally. Workers shouted him down with chants for "Workers' power now!" and demanded to hear again from the WRG.

BUREAUCRATS STIFLE STRUGGLE

Given the upsurge that their hesitant talk of struggle had unleashed, the bureaucracy now mobilized all its forces to stifle the struggle. Knowing they couldn't simply stop all industrial action, they tried first to get the workers under their control by keeping struggles isolated. They fought to separate rolling strikes by the militant nurses, teachers' occupations of schools slated for closure, and industrial action by power and transport workers. A transport workers' strike on November 20 was kept entirely passive, with no rallies, pickets or meetings; calls for strike action were drowned out by the bureaucrats' begging for negotiation.

The Liberals took the bureaucrats' sabotage as an invitation to launch a fresh offensive. On "Black Friday," November 27, the Liberals forced through Parliament a savage new series of cuts; they also advanced the implementation date of most of the industrial relations laws from March 1993 to that very day! In this fresh attack, an additional 6500 education, 3500 health, 7000 transport and thousands more

Victoria workers were often harangued by Labor and union leaders for causing trouble when the economy was in recession. At one factory in Western Australia, workers were left hanging when they were fired for striking in solidarity; instead, the ACTU blamed the workers.

The Victoria union leaders deepened their capitulation further by offering the Liberal government a truce over the Christmas holiday, promising not to call any strikes during the period. Liberal leader Jeff Kennett arrogantly replied,

I call on them to put an end to their industrial disruption not just for Christmas but for the period beyond it.

In spite of this, the bureaucrats went ahead and banned any strike action until January 11! A betrayal of the workers of historic proportions was now well under way.

TACTICAL SHIFTS

These events necessitated a tactical change by the Workers Revolution Group, which so far had been aiming the demand for a general strike chiefly at the VTHC tops. This was done because the mass of workers held great illusions on these "leaders." By demanding that they call the action necessary to win, the WRG sought to expose their treachery and thereby prove the need for a revolutionary leadership. To do otherwise would have eased the pressure on the Trades Hall leaders from the workers.

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But now, with the VTHC's sabotage of the struggle in full view, many workers had lost their illusions in the leadership. The most advanced workers saw that the central VTHC and ACTU leaders were consciously acting against the workers' interests; they held few illusions that the bureaucrats would lead a fight. Since Kennett's second wave of attacks targeted some of the most militant workers — in power, transport and health — the focus of struggle shifted.

With no reason to expect the VTHC to lead anything, the most militant workers exerted pressure on the leaders of the key unions under attack. The struggle now focused on whether the transport, power and health workers' unions would strike against the attacks. So the WRG raised the demand for indefinite strike action on the leaders of these unions, while also pointing to the need to broaden the struggle into an indefinite general strike of all workers.

The importance of this tactical shift was immediately confirmed: hundreds of train workers voted almost unanimously for an indefinite general strike against the Kennett offensive — and then took strike action themselves. Other workers launched wildcat strikes.

But the workers were not able to break the bureaucrats' grip. The combined transport and power workers strike planned for December 9 was called off at the last minute by the bureaucrats. A key blow was dealt to the militant workers when the Melbourne tram workers' union (known for its militancy) concluded secret negotiations with the government allowing the destruction of hundreds of jobs.

These defeats again changed the situation. The militant workers had been significantly set back. But the VTHC leaders felt that the ACTU was moving too fast in winding down the campaign; the pace threatened Trades Hall's ability to sell the betrayal to the workers. Feeling the need to at least promise action in the future, the VTHC announced a strike and mass demonstration for March 1.

Trades Hall's apparent break with the ACTU led the mass of workers back into the arms of the VTHC bureaucracy. To combat the illusions held by the mass of workers in the Trades Hall leaders, the WRG again had to raise the demand for a general strike on the Trades Hall tops.

'DON'T FIGHT, JUST VOTE'

With the union bureaucrats showing the bosses how reasonable and flexible they could be, and with the Liberals unable to implement a speedy end to the conflict, the Labor Party saw its opportunity. Aiming to show the bourgeoisie that the Liberals' plan for a nationwide offensive against the working class would only lead to "industrial mayhem," Prime Minister Keating called a snap election for March 13.

To prove his commitment to anti-working class austerity, Keating lent \$1.6 billion dollars to the Victoria government under the condition that they fire 12,000 state employees. Then he announced new legislation to transfer all workers on Victoria state awards, facing the Liberals' attacks, to Federal awards, where they would be subject to Labor's enterprise bargaining. The point was that this legislation could only come into effect after Labor's re-election.

The struggle in Victoria had from the start been one over the very future of Australian capitalism — to maintain the Labor bureaucracy as a significant prop, or to jettison it in favor of state-supported market austerity. All along, the inherent logic of the union bureaucrats had been to preserve the federal Labor government by sacrificing workers' interests. This was now made explicit. The struggle against the Liberals' offensive was to be derailed into a campaign to reelect Labor. The March 1 demonstration was not to be held

even under a fake call for struggle, but instead under the banner, "Keep the Liberals out — vote Labor."

VOTE LABOR?

The March election were the clearest test of revolutionary policy in Australia. In the struggle to win workers to the program of socialist revolution, Marxists understand that it is necessary to use elections to put to the test the leaders of the working class and the illusions they sow.

Electoral support to social democratic parties has an honored place in the arsenal of Leninists. (See "Workers Power: A Powerless Answer to Reformism," *PR* No. 23.) The tactic of "critical support" can be used when masses of workers are in motion and have illusions that electing reformists to office will advance their own cause. It is a united-front proposal to the mass of non-revolutionary workers; it supports their struggle, objectively against the misleaders, and aims criticism at the reformists because their counter-revolutionary programs inevitably betray the struggle.

Such support is by no means automatic. When the misleaders are actually betraying the masses, it is critical to deny any hint of support, especially for electoral passivity. In sum, any united-front tactic by communists must be based on the class-struggle conjuncture: the movement and consciousness of the masses and their relation to the current leaders.

The November 10 strike gave great impetus to a general strike, but since then the union tops' sabotage of the campaign has greatly weakened the workers. The most militant workers in the power, transport and health unions have suffered serious setbacks. While there are thousands of workers who want to break from the betraying union leaders and move onto the road of mass struggle, there are hundreds of thousands more who have reacted to the setbacks by maintaining illusions in the VTHC and who see Labor as a lesser evil than the Liberals.

If the advanced workers are unable to win their fellows to a winning strategy and a break from the union tops, they will be strangled, and the whole class will suffer an historic defeat. To urge a vote for Labor when it is openly leading the sabotage of the workers' struggle would be the gravest treachery. It would mean reinforcing, not undermining, the illusions of the backward workers.

The militants are under tremendous pressure to retreat under the Labor Party's banner, but they know that this will mean certain defeat. They need leadership that shows them how to win the mass of workers to a struggle that can defeat the Kennett attacks. Against the union bureaucracy's slogan at the March 1 demonstration, "Keep the Liberals out," the WRG counterposed the demand for a general strike against the Kennett attacks:

The VTHC "vote Labor" campaign of protest strikes, and the indefinite general strike, are not complementary tactics. They are opposites. One is what is necessary to win. The other is the road to defeat.

But having the VTHC tops call a general strike is not the only road to an indefinite general strike. The WRG is urging workers to fight in every union and workplace for the perspective of indefinite strike action. Militants at union meetings can raise the demand on their leaders to call the union out on strike — and demand that the VTHC support them by spreading the struggle into a general strike.

Moreover, at a time when the union bureaucrats are openly betraying the workers' struggle and clamping down on all strikes and protests, there is a real possibility of wildcat strikes without the union leaders' approval. (As noted above, some have already happened). While no fetish should be

made of the trade unions, attention must be paid at all times to the unity of the working class, including its organizations. Because of the danger of isolation, a wildcat strike must be undertaken only as a last resort. Any wildcat would have to form a strike committee to demand union recognition and to raise the demand on all the union leaders for spreading the struggle into a general strike. The WRG says, "Forward to a general strike — with or without Trades Hall!"

LEFT SUPPORTS LABOR

At every point in the struggle, the other far-left groups, the centrists, all found excuses for not fighting for a general strike and for not challenging the Labor Party's union bureaucrats. The upshot is that they stood aside from the struggle for revolutionary leadership of the working class. We deal here with those which have international affiliations: the ISO, the Socialist Labor League (SLL) and the Spartacists.

The ISO trailed the Labor bureaucrats all down the line. It describes its strategy as being "to throw ourselves behind every 'official' action and push it as far as we can." (*The Socialist*, June 1992.) They explain this position — and their subsequent opposition to fighting for a general strike — by saying that socialists have to base themselves not on what is necessary to defeat the Kennett attacks but on what is possible. A general strike is too advanced an idea for the workers; anyone who raises it is "ultra-left."

But workers are more than capable of understanding the need for a general strike. The mass rally and strike on November 10 proved it; and in their vote for an indefinite general strike, Melbourne's railway workers declared it. The real reason the ISO thinks a general strike impossible is that they accept the bureaucracy as immovable.

Moreover, in their leaflet for the November 10 rally, they claimed that "the message from New Zealand is that the union officials gave away too much and the fight began too late." Too much? The officials should have given away less? Even if the ISO meant "give nothing away," this is a call for using workers' action as a bargaining chip in a deal with the Liberals; it echoes the bureaucrats' "United We Bargain, Divided We Beg" sell-out slogan.

Thus the ISO become the standard-bearers for a militant surrender campaign. As the VTHC fought to scale down the struggle after November 10, the ISO tagged along, calling for an "ongoing industrial campaign" and a "series of one-day statewide stoppages" — anything but a general strike. Then, when the bureaucrats sought to bring their betrayals to a grand finale in an orgy of Laborite electoralism, the ISO loyally called for workers to "fight the Liberals every inch of the way" — not fight the bosses or the Labor Party that has carried out the bosses' attacks for a decade.

While the bureaucrats fought to stop all struggles against Kennett with their "Vote Labor" campaign, the ISO peddled the lie that a Labor government would defend the workers — even though they elsewhere admit that the last decade of Labor governments has been a "disaster for ordinary workers." No amount of charlatany is too great for these left-wing pimps for Labor. (For more on the ISO's behavior, see *Workers Revolution* No. 19.)

CENTRISTS ACT ALIKE

The SLL, affiliated to the U.S. Workers League, appears to have sectarian policies vastly different from the opportunist ISO. But in fact they both refuse to challenge the Labor bureaucrats' grip on the workers. The SLL opposed the call for a general strike because, they say, sabotage by the bureaucrats is unavoidable. "The union bureaucrats will para-

lyse the general strike with the capitalist state," they said, and so any fight for a general strike is ruled out. In practice the SLL denounced the November 10 rally as a "phony general strike" and refused to participate.

This stance amounts to scabbing. It reflects the SLL's belief that unions are no longer workers' organizations but "corporate appendages of management" and "direct agencies of imperialism." To unions in general and to the struggle against the Liberals' attacks in particular, the SLL counterposes building — themselves. That is, mass organizations are to be replaced by a handful! The result, abstention from the struggle, means refusing to challenge the bureaucrats.

The Spartacist League links together the false methods of the ISO and SLL. They argue that to raise any demands on union leaders is opportunist, since no workers believe in them; such demands can only foster illusions in the bureaucrats rather than expose them. But if this were true, how did 150,000 workers rally to the VTHC's November 10 rally? Why do many workers active in the struggle express faith in the bureaucrats? By denying that working-class backwardness exists, the Spartacists accept the bureaucrats' grip on the backward workers.

When the Spartacists do talk about strike action, they do not aim the demand as a challenge to anyone, but only bandy it around as a good idea; thus they echo the bureaucrats' empty promises. And like the ISO, the Spartacists oppose calling for an "unrealistic" indefinite general strike — they counterpose a strike by just four unions. Their method is a recipe for the isolation of the most militant workers.

BUILDING THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Despite their ideological differences, the centrists act alike. The ISO accepts the leadership of the union bureaucracy and thus deduces the impossibility of a general strike. The SLL denounces the bureaucracy but also concludes that a general strike is out of the question. The Spartacists' wishing away of the bureaucracy leads to the same result.

What unites all three organizations is their rejection of the working class's ability to learn from its own experience and build its own revolutionary party. They share the belief that non-proletarian intellectuals must bring consciousness to the working class, that workers alone are capable of nothing more than trade-union consciousness.

For years we in the Communist Organization for the Fourth International have fought this anti-Leninist theory of leadership, which always fundamentally subordinates the working class to the middle class. (See "What Has Been Done to 'What Is to be Done'," *PR* No. 29.) The centrist condescending saviors in Marxist guise strive not to show the way forward but to mire workers in backwardness. The effect is not to undermine capitalism but to prolong its rule.

Our comrades in the WRG have achieved real victories in the pursuit of the aim of building the revolutionary party. They have already attracted a small but significant number of workers to their program. And they have linked with thousands of advanced workers in the fight for an indefinite general strike. But much more remains to be done.

The greatest obstacle facing the Australian working class is that it entered this historic crisis with only the smallest nucleus of a revolutionary party. It can succeed in forging its party in today's battles, and the Australian struggle is already rich with lessons for class-conscious workers everywhere. The main lesson is the reconfirmation of the central task of workers everywhere: the construction of revolutionary parties as national sections of a re-created Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution. ●

Chancellor Plans Racist Restructuring of CUNY Higher Education and the Working Class

A widely publicized report issued in December by a committee appointed by Chancellor Ann Reynolds called for "restructuring" the City University of New York (CUNY) by canceling many liberal arts majors at senior colleges. Students wanting to take advanced courses in these fields would have to transfer or commute between distant campuses. Entering students would have to choose their majors before they have the experience to know what fields interest them.

In response to objections to her plan, so far largely from faculty bodies, Reynolds denies that her goal is to shrink CUNY or turn it into an elite institution. But if she gets her way she will do exactly that. She insists the proposal implies no specific cuts: faculty and students will have their say. But that only means that each college can save some programs by sacrificing others.

Reynolds' plan discriminates most against colleges with Black and Latino majorities. Among the CUNY colleges, the percentage of programs threatened correlates highly with the percentage of minority students. For example, City College, situated between Harlem and one of the city's largest Spanish-speaking neighborhoods, would lose its programs in anthropology, classics, dance, film, French, philosophy, Spanish and possibly Latin American and Puerto Rican studies. German and Russian majors have been already eliminated.

The LRP on the City College campus has been actively fighting the Reynolds plan. We distributed thousands of leaflets calling attention especially to the schemes' racist and class biases; we held a forum on campus to inform students of the politics behind the proposal. We also intervened at meetings held by liberal groups opposed to the plan to argue against their hopeless strategy of coalition with college administrators and bourgeois politicians and in favor of the working-class strategy outlined below.

CAPITALIST EDUCATION STRATEGIES

The restructuring plan continues CUNY's long-term practice of tailoring its educational philosophy to fit the needs of employers. In the 1960's the bosses needed more educated workers, so public colleges were expanded. The Black and Puerto Rican student struggle at City College in 1969, demanding access for people of color to the City University, accelerated the bourgeoisie's timetable. Today, however, with capitalism in a serious economic crisis, the authorities seek to cut back quality higher education for working-class students. The full-time faculty has been cut by over 20 percent as enrollment rose over the past three years.

The cuts are just fine with the *New York Times*, which endorsed the Chancellor's proposal. It complained that too many CUNY students take too long to graduate. "That undermines the university's academic mission," namely "to meet the work force needs of New York and other cities." The *Times* ignores the fact that so many students work full

time and therefore can take only part-time programs.

The Chancellor's new scheme comes on top of whopping tuition hikes in recent years that severely reduced college opportunities for low-income students. As well, CUNY has recently adopted the Chancellor's "College Preparatory Initiative." This CPI requires all entering students, especially those heading for senior colleges, to take a range of college preparatory courses that few New York City high schools offer (only 15 out of 120). In the present climate of austere budget cuts, if these requirements are enforced the result will be to close CUNY's four-year colleges to all but a narrow layer of students from relatively privileged backgrounds.



1989: Mass action of thousands of working-class CUNY students forced politicians to rescind tuition increase.

Reynolds is paving the way for a two-tier system to produce a few well educated experts for a handful of high-paying careers, along with many more graduates with narrow job-oriented training. Specific job-training programs at community colleges are to be expanded, according to the restructuring plan, while broad liberal arts education is to be minimized.

The CPI and the new plan both detour minority and working-class youth away from senior colleges — and from the better paying, more creative jobs that require a liberal arts background. They will hinder many students from developing critical thinking and gaining wider access to information about the world and society — beyond obstacles already provided by academic departments that reflect capitalist ideology. Young people who hope to get a better life through study are being told, in effect, to abandon their dreams.

CLINTONITES' TWO-TIER THINKING

The CUNY plan fits right in with the ideas of the Clinton administration. In his latest book, Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, the president's long-time adviser, justifies the growing income inequality in the United States. "No longer are Americans rising or falling together, as if in one national

boat," he writes — as if that was ever true in this class- and race-divided society. "We are, increasingly, in different, smaller boats."

According to Reich, the most fortunate Americans are those trained to be what he calls "symbolic analysts" — managers, researchers, engineers, policy makers, etc. As students, they benefit from a broad liberal education: they are taught to grasp a problem as a whole, not simply to do routine tasks. As for other classes, competition in the global economy requires that these "routine producers" (Reich's term) acquire "a solid grounding in mathematics, basic science, and reading and communication skills" — but not the liberal arts. Reich's recipe is precisely what Reynolds & Co. are proposing for the lower-echelon CUNY campuses.

THE WORKING-CLASS ALTERNATIVE

Struggles to demand the highest quality education for all are necessary. It is no wonder that CUNY students have been among the most militant in fighting for their needs. A campaign of mass rallies and strikes aimed at triggering a wider working-class revolt against austerity is the only way to stop reactionary schemes like the Reynolds plan.

In contrast to the LRP's working-class approach, an outfit calling itself the CUNY Student Union proposes building a bloc of students, faculty, college administrators and Democratic politicians to change Reynolds' mind. Such a strategy is futile: the administrators are appointed by Reynolds and are hardly likely to stand up to her — unless there is mass pressure against the plan. The politicians, from the mayor, the governor and state legislators to the Clinton administration, see the plan as a way to implement the

savage budget cuts they demand.

The so-called Student Union is in fact a handful of students led by "socialists" from Solidarity and the ISO. It is not a mass organization as the name implies, and cannot possibly become one in the absence of a mass struggle. But that is what the centrists are avoiding, pushing instead a petition campaign and bourgeois politics-as-usual.

Their original petition professed "concern" about "problematic" suggestions in Reynolds' plan. It assured Reynolds of its authors' "complete agreement" with her claimed "need to assure academic quality at CUNY" — as if the Chancellor were serious when she prattles about quality. Only after a fight led by an LRPer against this liberal pap did the "union" come up with a petition actually opposing the plan.

A friendly reporter from the Hunter College *Envoy* (March 2) summed up the Student Union's hopes accurately:

The SU also expressed its commitment to uniting students, faculty and staff without inciting the kind of radical student protests seen over the 1991 tuition increase.

Unlike fake socialists who rely on alliances with enemies of the working class, we believe there is an alternative to education for a class-based economy. Education does not have to be tracked by class and race. Students do not have to be channeled to study only subjects directly connected to hoped-for jobs. Education doesn't have to be a preparation for being exploited; it could serve to develop each human being rather than pimp for profits.

But that will only happen when working people have mobilized massively to defend their living conditions and regain the losses of the past decades. In the end it will take a revolutionary struggle to produce revolutionary solutions. ●

Labor Party Lovefest in Detroit

by Bob Wolfe

Like bees to honey, 200 "labor activists" swarmed to Detroit in December for an educational conference sponsored by Labor Party Advocates (LPA). The conference drew bureaucrats, rank-and-file unionists and a large assortment of fake revolutionaries. The latter group consisted mainly of phony Trotskyists of every shade — Socialist Action, Socialist Organizer, Spark, the Socialist Workers Party, Solidarity, Labor Militant — all of whom came to cheer on the reformist LPA led by OCAW official Tony Mazzocchi.

With a new administration heading for Washington and a world economy shaking at its roots, one might have thought that such a conference would be a wild affair of rival programs and knockdown arguments over what was to be done. Not a chance. Even though the conference was largely a left zoo, socialism became the "s-word" — it was completely buried. The left preferred to make love, not war; bureaucrats and open reformists were treated with kid gloves.

BUREAUCRATS AND LEFTISTS

Why the lovefest? To begin with, Mazzocchi and his followers need each other. Given the demoralization in the unions resulting from their bureaucratic strangulation, Mazzocchi and others recognize that they need left activists — in much the same way that Ron Carey used the TDU to win the Teamsters' presidency. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 42.) Despite its small numbers, the left has cadre who can help build a "movement" if the LPA ever takes off.

On the other hand, Mazzocchi has connections and credibility among labor officials, a powerful attraction to the

centrist left tendencies. Tired of their marginal existence, they see a chance to get in on the ground floor of something they think is going to be big. They intend to ride Mazzocchi's coattails and don't want to rock the boat, even if they are concerned that the LPA is too conservative and is moving too slowly for their tastes.

Nevertheless, Mazzocchi's relations with the left are hardly based on mutual admiration and trust. While he lets the left play in his ballpark, he knows that bureaucrats open to the LPA want nothing to do with anything that appears to be dominated by the left. (There were no overt hostilities at the sessions, but there were clear grumblings about "socialists" and "communists.") Mazzocchi must constantly reassure LPA's right-wing that he can control the left.

Mazzocchi acknowledged the potential tensions in his Sunday sermon to the faithful. He joked that New York would be the last place LPA would organize: a meeting there would attract 200 people from 200 groups with 200 programs. This was a swipe at an LPA meeting that had actually taken place, and Mazzocchi's gibe forced the Labor Militant group to offer a mild defense of the meeting it had run. Mazzocchi then downplayed his wisecrack, but the point was made: leftists may join LPA only if they behave. Labor Militant's low-key contributions showed they had learned the lesson.

LPA AND THE DEMOCRATS

Indeed, the "success" of the conference was that it told Mazzocchi and the bureaucrats that the left is ready to play ball and police itself. Called by the Detroit and Cleveland chapters of the LPA, not by Mazzocchi, the conference was

organized largely by leftists. Mazzocchi attended only the second day and seemed pleased that the conference was not a repeat of the New York meeting.

The flavor became clear at the first panel, which featured Frank Valenta, director of United Steelworkers District 28 and President of the Greater Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor. Dressed in an expensive suit befitting a man with such a mighty title, Valenta showed his class outlook by starting off with a sick joke about having been in such a rush at the airport that he decided not to stop for a "shine." As the secret socialists rolled their eyes and squirmed in their seats, he boasted that organized labor was "the most important group inside the Democratic Party" and that "Bill and Al" (sounds like old drinking buddies) should thank labor for "the job we did for them." Before one could overcome feelings of nausea, Valenta was paying tribute to labor's role in making John Kennedy president and lamenting that it failed to elect Hubert Humphrey, "one of the greatest humanitarians" — in reality, a vicious persecutor of leftists.

Until a labor party is built, Valenta argued, labor should run candidates inside the Democratic Party. In fact, his local has lots of people holding office as Democrats. He gave clear proof that bureaucrats mean to use LPA to protect their left flank while continuing to serve as flunkies for the Democrats. (Mazzocchi says that since LPA is not yet a real organization, it should not take positions on issues and candidates; LPA members may participate in the Democratic Party as well as in other third party formations.)

Valenta truly tested the LPA's ability to discipline itself. Grinning and bearing it, the left passed with flying colors. Valenta's pro-capitalist speech was courteously applauded. Lynn Henderson of Socialist Action, a panelist alongside Valenta, raised the problem of using the LPA as a cover to support Democrats. Millie Phillips, another panelist who often writes for *Socialist Organizer*, criticized "many union leaders" for "proclaiming the Clinton victory as our victory." But neither of these socialists (billed only as unionists, of course) chose to name names. No one wanted to shatter the harmony by getting into a political fight with union leaders, even over the Democratic Party.

THE REAL MEANING OF A LABOR PARTY

This diplomatic mood lasted throughout the conference. For example, Dave Riehle of the former Fourth Internationalist Tendency gave an incredible speech extolling the "labor party history" of the American working class. He lauded the Minnesota Farmer Labor Party that elected Floyd Olson governor on a "radical program" in 1934. Olson in fact was the governor who tried to break the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamster strike. Yet even the old-timers, some of who once were real Trotskyists, remained silent in the face of such an insult to the history of American Trotskyism. Another victory for good manners — over the truth.

In a featured talk, Elaine Bernard, former head of the New Democratic Party (the Canadian labor party) in British Columbia, advocated building a U.S. labor party as a "loyal opposition" to the bourgeois parties in order to "legitimize political discussions inside the labor movement." This means promising to be "responsible" — that is, not revolutionary, and perhaps even ready to kick out open communists — in order to win a respectable platform for reformism.

In another presentation, labor historian Mike Merrill correctly pointed out that a labor party based on the unions extends the logic of trade unionism to the field of electoral politics. Just as the unions negotiate bargaining conditions between workers and bosses in separate industries, a labor

party would attempt to change the terms of trade between capital and labor overall. He added that the Democratic Party had played that role in the 1930's and until recently.

Merrill's was an openly reformist understanding of a labor party; as he stated, the victory of such a party would in no way mean the end of capitalism or class divisions. But unlike Valenta, Merrill raised his perspective from the "left," and therefore his views caused a stir. He exposed the pretense that building a labor party automatically advances the cause of revolution and socialism.

In its report on the conference, *Socialist Organizer* complains that several participants, including the Solidarity group, were members or supporters of the New Party — an outfit that advocates supporting some Democratic candidates. (*The Organizer*, January 1993.) But that is exactly the logic of LPA: a labor party based on the unions when there is no mass union struggle will inevitably be based on the union bureaucrats. And that means a party with the outlook of Mazzocchi, Valenta and the New Party types: an "inside/outside" approach to the Democrats.

NEEDED: REVOLUTIONARY PARTY ADVOCATES

Not surprisingly, Merrill's reformist program went largely unchallenged; the main criticism from the floor was that he violated the ban on discussing programs! Having themselves become advocates for a labor party rather than a revolutionary party, the phony Trotskyists could only cringe at the vision of a counterrevolutionary labor party.

The trouble with the LPA left was not just their failure to fight for, or even raise, programmatic demands. In the future we can expect all sorts of clever centrist programs to emerge. The real problem is that their labor party is not connected to real struggles and a working-class movement. In the absence of mass struggles, the call for a labor party can only be understood as electoral reformism. Under such conditions, even transitional demands would only create illusions in the reformists' ability to improve life under capitalism.

Lynn Henderson was right to warn of the danger of LPA becoming a left cover for pro-Democratic bureaucrats. His mistake, as with his leftist co-thinkers, is not to recognize that without a mass upsurge the labor party slogan can only lead to capitulation to reformist bureaucrats who will not break with the Democrats unless they're forced to.

Trotsky understood the labor party tactic as a means to open the way for propaganda for the revolutionary party. He made clear he had no intent of advocating a reformist labor party or calling on workers to follow the road of the British Labor Party. Trotsky was above all a *revolutionary party advocate*. The same cannot be said for those who abuse his name. They understand that a reformist labor party is the only kind that can be built today, and they're for it. Their role in the LPA is the same as the two-stage strategy in the unions that leads them to build "reform" movements like the Carey campaign in the Teamsters: reformism today, revolution (they say privately) tomorrow. Who are they kidding?

Genuine Trotskyists must fight *today* for the party the working class really needs, the only answer to the crisis of capitalism — the revolutionary party as a section of a recreated Fourth International. Of course, the path before us doesn't always lead straight to the revolutionary party. The specific nature of an upsurge in the struggle may lead the working class through the detour of a labor party. But even in such a case, we must never cease to fight for the revolutionary party and oppose any attempt to impose a pro-capitalist party as the solution to the workers' struggle. This is the only road to victory in the class struggle. ●

Gay Struggle Meets Democrats' Deathtrap

Gays and lesbians face a growing attack. Well-financed fundamentalist Christian organizations are leading a political offensive against gains won since the 1970's. But it is not just a fringe attack. The mainstream parties and churches encourage the homophobic mood. The shocking growth in physical assaults has been met by the refusal of city governments, Republican and Democratic, and their friends the cops, to defend gays and lesbians. And Bill Clinton, the supposedly

Don't hold your breath. He has also refused to fight for domestic partnership laws that extend legal benefits of marriage to gays, both in Arkansas and now as President. It is no coincidence that the one issue he picked forces gays to wrap themselves twice as tightly as non-gays in the American flag to prove their acceptability.

There is reason for the armed forces to repress gay rights. Imperial domination, the business of the U.S. military,



pro-gay president, is playing the same treacherous game.

Unfortunately, many gays and lesbians are swallowing hopeless reform solutions. Militant struggle won significant if limited changes during capitalism's postwar boom period. Now, when the economy is going downhill and the attacks sharpen, gays are being detoured into a tight electoral alliance forged between their leaders and the Democratic Party. In exchange for mostly nominal gains, the struggle against oppression is being gutted.

CLINTON AND GAYS

Right after the election, a furor broke out over Clinton's pledge to end the military's ban on gays. The gay establishment not only supported this reform but cheered for Clinton. Yet somehow Clinton refuses to play his assigned role of gallant crusader for gay rights.

Clinton picked this issue knowing that the ban is likely to be eliminated anyway through the courts. Then he subordinated the principle of gay rights to negotiations with Congress and the military brass. He accepted a six-month delay during which gays are still being penalized. And he agreed to stiffen the "conduct" codes that will inevitably victimize gays far more than heterosexuals and hit working-class recruits, the bulk of gays in the military, far more than officers.

Clinton's talk of reforms for gays, like his quick repeal of the anti-abortion gag rule, was meant to shore up support among liberal professionals — as he prepared to attack the working class through economic austerity. If he were really interested in ending gay oppression, he would have fought to decriminalize sodomy in Arkansas when he was Governor; he would now end the army policy forbidding anal and oral sex.

depends on inculcating attitudes of contempt and brutality among the troops. It often includes condoning rapes of women. The Tailhook scandal, where dozens of Navy brass looked the other way while junior officers pawed every woman in sight, was no aberration. In this culture, welcoming gays into the military undermines such "manly" traditions.

We warn gays in the military against relying on presidential promises for personal safety: to "come out" under present conditions could cost your life. The democratic fight of women and gays against all forms of discrimination, even in the military, deserves support. But for oppressed people to join the imperialist U.S. armed forces is to sign up with the enemy of oppressed people here and across the globe. It is the wrong side.

NEW YORK RAINBOW CURRICULUM BATTLE

Since middle-class gays are generally the ones who can more easily afford to come out, anti-gay reactionaries manipulatively portray all gays as well-off and therefore alien to the interests of the beleaguered sectors of society. This false stereotyping is abetted by the strategy of pro-capitalist gay leaders: aligning with elitist forces who many working-class people view as threats to their well-being. The alliance thus helps the anti-gay campaign extend its mass base.

Take the fight over the "Rainbow Curriculum" in New York. This document, a teachers' guide proposed by Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez, contains a brief section encouraging teachers to help students with two parents of the same sex feel accepted, starting in elementary school.

The guide was attacked by churchmen and politicians. Some local school boards simply ignored it, but homophobic

president Mary Cummins of a Queens district banned it, with enormous media publicity. She and fellow reactionaries demanded that teachers not mention homosexuality at all or else denounce it as a vile perversion.

At several local school board hearings, speakers divided into two antagonistic, screaming sides. One was led by right wingers spewing hatred for gays. The other featured liberals defending gay rights. But the anti-gay side included working-class people, many of them Black and Latino parents.

Why would working people of color align with reactionaries who feed off their oppression? After decades of declining wages and collapsing public services, people lose hope. Crime is everywhere; drugs proliferate; gangs expand. Adults fear aimless youth who see no alternative to anti-social behavior. Parents see their children heading nowhere. They pray that an education will help them get a decent job.

As the social fabric unravels, families tear apart. Mothers are forced to work, but the system provides no child care. Parents can't control their kids; at least, they pray, the schools will keep them in line. Schools in New York, like elsewhere, are losing teachers, classrooms, books and working toilets. In many decaying schools the only hope is for survival, not education.

In this situation, the middle-class gay organizations sprung to the defense of Fernandez, who many parents see, correctly, as an elitist helping to drain the schools of funds and resources. Cummins and her ilk claim that Fernandez and gays are part of the attack on the family, while children get no education and are encouraged to run wild. Thus advocacy of gay rights is manipulated to appear to be a grave inequity, not the fight for justice it is.

SACRIFICING FOR CAPITALISM

The Blacks and Latinos who backed Cummins were taken for a ride by a leadership steeped in racism and reaction. The Marxist leader August Bebel once described anti-Semitism as the "socialism of fools"; homophobia by workers today is a similar idiotic delusion. But it should be just as obvious that working-class gays and lesbians, in fact all those who want to end anti-gay oppression, should object to their cause being hijacked by forces whose social goals only help build a mass homophobic movement.

The truth is that Cummins & Co. are merely the local agents of the right wing of U.S. capitalism, led recently by Reagan and Bush. They blame not only gays but working women and people of color for the decay of "family values."

But the truth is also that Fernandez and Mayor David Dinkins are local agents of the Democrats and the liberal wing of U.S. capitalism. They "defend" rights of the oppressed in form but not content. Remember the adroit use of the Democratic convention to celebrate "the year of the woman" — as a cover for a program forcing working people to sacrifice (working-class women are hit especially hard), and for shunting Black demands aside.

Of course, Reagan-Bush-Cummins agree with Clinton-Dinkins-Fernandez that it's the masses who must sacrifice. Their differences are over how to get the oppressed and the exploited to go at each other's throats, blaming each other for the growing horrors capitalism is inflicting on all.

One strategy of liberal gay and lesbian leaders is to emphasize how pro-family and pro-establishment they are. Although many gays are conservative, the visible existence of gays and lesbians is becoming too great a challenge to the reactionary ideology of the nuclear family. (See *Proletarian*

Revolution No. 34 for an analysis of how the family maintains the oppression of women and exploitation of workers.) Trying to portray gays as defenders of the family will never work. The only alternative is to point out the truth, that "family values" garbage is used to promote racist and sexist stereotypes needed more and more to shore up the system.

Homophobia is not a psychological disease, as the term might imply; it is backward consciousness propagated by the ruling class to deflect struggle from the real enemy. It also reflects the ignorance and prejudice that capitalism fosters about sexual matters in general. The Rainbow Curriculum fiasco shows that capitalism prefers not to tell children that gay and lesbian alternatives to "traditional" families exist, much less offer the kind of sex education kids really need.

GAYS AND THE WORKING CLASS

It is not just evil people who drive the oppressed against each other. The system compels it. But "socialist" gays and non-gays think it the height of political savvy not to publicly challenge capitalism, offering the excuse that the masses do not accept revolution as an alternative. Thus they help teach workers that capitalism is the only reality. It is only communists who tell the truth about capitalism and fight for working-class revolution to liberate us all.

The working class *can* be won to support gay liberation in the course of struggle. For example, during the British coal miners' strike of 1984-85, the strikers faced not just an invading army of police but an unremitting barrage of attacks from the media. But various working-class and other organizations rallied to their cause, joining the picket lines against cops and scabs. These included gay organizations, appearing under their own banners, who recognized that the state and cops were a common enemy. The miners at first felt dubious about these unexpected allies, but many came to welcome them and to rethink their attitudes toward homosexuality.

There is another roadblock facing gays and lesbians who are looking for serious alternatives. Given the political crimes committed against gays in the name of "socialism," it is no surprise that there is much anti-Marxism among gays. But in fact the Russian revolution meant major advances for gay rights. In a backward country, even before the United States deigned to grant women the vote, the Bolshevik workers' state explicitly acknowledged equality of gays and lesbians with heterosexuals, which years of gay struggle under capitalism have yet to achieve. The fact that these gains were set back and betrayed in the Stalinist counterrevolution is a further condemnation of capitalism, not socialism.

Today, success for anti-gay forces is by no means guaranteed. For the working class to be won to a revolutionary perspective, and for phony political misleaderships to be defeated, the kernel of the proletarian revolutionary party has to be built now. There will be no liberation for gays and lesbians until capitalism is overthrown. ●

I Would Like More Information About the LRP

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The Pink Left's 'Red-Brown' Blocs

The collapse of the Stalinist regimes in East Europe has left a legacy of political turmoil and brutal nationalist wars. Although mass strikes and other workers' actions were instrumental in overthrowing the old rulers, the leadership was seized by anti-working class nationalists. As a result, openly bourgeois governments replaced the pseudo-communists.

The new rulers quickly attacked the workers by shutting down industries and laying off millions. But they have been unable to turn the statified capitalist economies into stable bastions of private enterprise. Nationalists have adopted the crudest chauvinist policies — contributing the odious term “ethnic cleansing” to the world's languages — in order to maintain the ruling classes' power and wipe out the danger posed by the working classes.

Stalinism in power, far from destroying the roots of regressive nationalism, instead rested on national domination. It stimulated both the chauvinism of the oppressors and the separatism of the oppressed. Deepened by economic crisis, the resulting conflicts have led to mass slaughter in the former Yugoslavia and could do the same in the ex-USSR.

The turmoil has disoriented most left organizations, especially those who regarded the old regimes as defending progressive societies. The left long ago abandoned theory and analysis in favor of rationalization. Now the process has achieved total absurdity. In *Proletarian Revolution* No. 41 we analyzed the theoretical confusion of centrist groups trying to figure out which “workers' states” were left. Here we deal with two glaring examples of political disasters resulting from leftists' disarray in the face of rampant nationalism.

SPARTACISTS' BACKHANDED SELF-CRITICISM

First the Spartacist tendency. Speaking of the “red-brown coalition” of Stalinist bureaucrats and national chauvinists and fascists in Russia, a leaflet distributed in October 1992 by the Spartacists in Russia said:

Any bloc with, any conciliation of these reactionary “national patriots,” no matter how many red flags are present, only furthers their goal of bloody fascist counter-revolution. (*Workers Vanguard*, Oct. 16.)

Couldn't be plainer. But who are the Spartacists aiming at with this rather obvious warning? Ostensibly, members of the RKRП (Russian Communist Workers Party), whose demonstrations “invariably include the fascist Pamyat and a gaggle of supporters of the rabidly anti-Semitic Zhirinovskiy” — as well as other Stalinist shards of the once ruling Communist Party. But look at the same paper's report of the Revolution Day demonstration in Moscow on November 7, 1991:

Despite a few pictures of Stalin sprinkled among the signs, there were many more of Lenin and there was also the red banner of the International Communist League [the Spartacists] emblazoned with the insignia of Trotsky's Fourth International. . . . At the same time there were instances of vicious reactionary attitudes, particularly anti-Semitism Pamyat salesmen were peddling their filth. The Stalinist organizers of the rally appealed to Great Russian chauvinism. Our comrades were baited alternately as “Trotskyites” and “Jews.” . . . (Nov. 22, 1991.)

That is, it was the Spartacists themselves whose red flags graced a rally run by Stalinists and full of fascist counterrevolutionaries! A few months later they described a March rally against Boris Yeltsin, sponsored by the same coalition:

The atmosphere was reminiscent of the November 7 Revolution Day march, when the nationalist tirades of the Stal-

inist “patriots” were swamped in an ocean of social protest. Protesters came in hopes of finding an answer to Yeltsin's relentless drive to capitalist immiseration. . . . But the demonstration's organizers . . . offered the crowds little more than a circus of nationalist diversion. (*Workers Vanguard*, April 3, 1992.)

Well, what else would you expect from a gang of right-wing nationalists and pro-capitalist Stalinists? But again the Spartacists were proudly involved. A recent document admits the Spartacists' “tactical” perspective:

Given the hardening of the “red-brown coalition,” our regroupment perspective toward elements aligned with the “patriots” is not likely to bear early fruit. However, there is evidence of political discontent among some within the milieu over the ludicrous and suicidal alliance with fascists. Meanwhile, we have increasingly shifted our tactical orientation . . . (*Spartacist*, Winter 1992-93.)

The fruitless orientation was not just tactical. As we show in a separate article on the Spartacists' discovery that the USSR is now capitalist, they habitually orient to Stalinism in power, for them the key to the “workers' states.” So they were consistent to be on hand with banners flying whenever the Russian Stalinists marched, even if the latter — not by accident — “happened” to be alongside fascists. Now they belatedly denounce their allies and unnamed suckers, acting as if they were not also condemning themselves.

RED-BROWN BLOC IN VIENNA

There was another “red-brown coalition” last summer: a rally in Vienna “against racism, imperialism and war” held on July 18 under the auspices of the ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt group (AST, the Austrian section of LRCI, the international headed by Workers' Power of Britain) — together with the Viennese branch of Vuk Draskovic's Serbian expansionist SPO (Serbian National Renewal). Among the participants were also members of the fascist Serbian Chetniks.

A political bloc between leftists and arch-reactionaries can lead only to absurdity, and it did. The result would have been hilarious if it weren't a matter of life and death questions. We quote from a report by the Austrian RKL:

On a truck serving as a platform, the leader of Serbian Renewal and the “Trotskyist” AST delivered their speeches in front of pictures of Serbian kings and the Great Serbian coat of arms. The former spoke for a half hour about God, King and the Serbian fatherland; then the AST speaker spoke against Austria and imperialism, and against imperialism and Austria. He was guaranteed applause from the approximately 1000 predominantly Serbian people whenever the Serbian leader summoned the masses to applaud with hand signals. But they remained silent when the AST comrade briefly criticized Serbian nationalism at the end. There were 100 or so Chetnik Youth who drowned out the AST speaker with chants of “Kosovo Remains Serbian.”

Then came the march, and at the final rally the AST's “united front policy” was conclusively brought to an end. When an AST comrade finally tried to criticize Chetnik nationalism . . . he was immediately dragged down from the truck by the Chetnik-fascists. Soon the ASTers were on the run away from the plaza, behind them a batch of Chetniks. They finally took refuge in a pastry shop. (*Klassenkampf*, Sept.-Oct. 1992.)

The comic-opera ending is omitted from the AST's own

self-justifying account:

Our goal was a demonstration against imperialism and racism which at the same time would also clearly take a position against the reactionary Bosnian civil war. This goal seemed achievable in common with Milatovic [head of the Vienna SPO], especially since in the negotiations he agreed to the slogan, "Support for all organizations against the nationalist war" and since we anticipated a larger number of non-nationalist immigrants to participate. . . .

The demonstration itself confronted us with an additional problem. A group of 50-70 militant Chetnik supporters forced itself into the demonstration and into the immediate vicinity of the united-front truck on which the loudspeakers were mounted. Their slogans and songs made it unambiguously clear that they stood on the Serbian side in the Bosnian war. . . . Together with several monarchist flags and pictures, this created the impression of a Great Serbian demonstration. We were physically unable to force the Chetniks out of the demonstration, and Milatovic showed that he was not interested in doing so by cheering their Great Serbian slogans. (*ArbeiterInnen Standpunkt*, Sept. 1992.)

Why did the AST fall into this scandalous trap? One reason is its policy of the "anti-imperialist united front," which guides it to join with apparently anyone. It is unquestionably necessary for Austrian leftists to take a stand against Austrian imperialism and chauvinism and to defend Yugoslav immigrants and refugees. But that does not require sharing nationalist platforms with reactionaries.

It is very unlikely that these particular nationalists could possibly have opposed the Serbian invasion of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The only way the SPO would "take a position against the reactionary Bosnian civil war" would be to fight against the Bosnian government. Its record was clear: according to BBC reporter Misha Glenny, Draskovic "preached a gospel

of Greater Serbia" and "appeared to be an even more frightening manifestation of Serbian nationalism than Milosevic" (Serbia's ruling demagogue); he stood for "expelling all Albanians from Serbian territory (which means from Kosovo) and he had an equally antipathetic attitude towards the Moslems of Bosnia." (*The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p. 39.)

Moreover, the LRCI's idea of a united front entails agreement on common slogans. Even if reactionaries did agree to the slogan "against the nationalist war," they had to give it a very narrow meaning. Authentic communists finding themselves in such a dubious coalition would have been impelled to re-examine their slogan and put forward one that would illuminate the difference between nationalists and revolutionaries. However, condescension towards the mentality of your audience rules out clarity over such "details."

TANGLED LINE ON SELF-DETERMINATION

The deformed workers' state theory also helped to produce the AST's political calamity. The theory leads some of its followers (like the RKL) to oppose self-determination for pro-capitalist breakaways like Slovenia and Croatia from allegedly proletarian (but in fact equally capitalist) Yugoslavia. LRCI has dodged this trap, but its workers' state theory is still at loggerheads with its efforts to appeal to bourgeois-democratic reformism. Unable to take a Leninist stand on self-determination, it has flip-flopped over national movements, tangling its line into insoluble knots.

In 1989 LRCI did not defend the East German "workers' state," choosing instead to defend the "integrity of the German nation." On the USSR, at first LRCI opposed independence for the Soviet republics, since that would have weakened the "workers' state"; accordingly, it supported Gorbachev's assault on Azerbaijan in early 1990. But when Moscow cracked down on Lithuania, LRCI changed its line and came out for self-determination. The reason given was LRCI's discovery that "bureaucratic conservative counter-

Communist Strategy in the Balkans

Bosnia-Herzegovina is not a nation as such but a collection of peoples with a common history — similar to many African states carved out by imperialism not based on a single national territory. Our position of self-determination and defensism means support for the struggle against oppression, not recognition of a formal national status.

It follows that we favor self-determination by the Bosnians as a whole: Muslims, Croats, Serbs, Jews and those who reject an ethnic designation. (Tens of thousands of Serbs remained in Sarajevo when the Bosnian capital came under siege and joined in its defense.) But the nationalist oppression and imperialist interference may instead forge a solely Muslim nation. That would be a setback for internationalism, but communists would defend that nation's self-determination.

If the Western powers move against Serbia, communists will defend Serbia against imperialism — as we did when the U.S. & Co. invaded Iraq in 1991 — because any imperialist intervention is an attack on the international working class. We may even have to withdraw support for Bosnia if it becomes a mere tool of an imperialist intervention. Under any circumstances, we campaign against any NATO or U.N. intervention in the Balkans. And we oppose the imperialist sanctions against Serbia, which chiefly harm the working class and opposition forces.

In their continuing war with each other, Serbia and Croatia may reach an imperialist-mediated accommodation. This would lead to a partitioning of Bosnia, under the guise of saving Bosnian lives. In any case, the Serbian-Croatian war is no longer a war for independence but rather a struggle over spoils, so we no longer side with Croatia. (See "Nationalism Shatters Yugoslavia," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 40.)

Though we stress above all that nationalism is a reactionary dead-end, certain national struggles in ex-Yugoslavia still represent defense of the oppressed. We support self-determination for Kosovo and demand "Serbian Forces Out!" We support self-determination for Macedonia and the right of its people to call their nation by its proper name, despite official Greek opposition and Western support for Greek chauvinism.

There has been a large but confused and capitalist-led anti-war movement in Serbia; this shows that despite Milosevic, the Serbian people are not inherently enemies of neighboring nationalities. Likewise, the mass strike movements in Serbia in 1989-90 and Kosovo in the 1980's pointed to the only solution to national and imperialist oppression: a Balkan workers' revolution, led by a genuine communist party, to establish a Balkan Socialist Federation and a United Socialist States of Europe.

ISO Defends Greek Reactionaries' 'Democratic Rights'

On January 25 the International Socialist Organization held a rally in New York to protest the jailing in Greece of five members of their affiliate, the Organization for Socialist Revolution (OSE). The OSEers are on trial for publicly opposing the reactionary Greek government's offensive against independent Macedonia, an ex-Yugoslav republic.

The ISO's political cowardice, however, turned the rally into a disaster. The audience turned out to be dominated by dozens of Greek government agents and right wingers (brought out by anti-Macedonian, anti-leftist publicity on local Greek-language television) who heckled and interrupted throughout. Cameramen from the nationalist Greek-American media videotaped and photographed everyone present.

What did the ISO leaders do? When outraged rally supporters tried to shout down the hecklers, the ISO shushed the former. On the right-wingers' demand, the ISO held a vote on whether to allow the videotaping and photographing to continue, and the ISO itself voted in favor! Further, the ISO invited right-wingers to speak at length from the floor. In effect they collaborated with their opponents, in the naive belief that TV pictures of the rally, if broadcast in Greece, would help their comrades' cause.

In sum, the ISO essentially gave the rally away to its enemies. Their excuse? The issue, after all, was "democratic rights" and "freedom of speech."

This is nonsense, and it could have been suicidal. Those who actively oppose the very purpose of the rally had no "democratic right" to address the gathering. This time we were lucky: the rightists were poorly organized and hesitant

to get physical. But what happens next time, now that they've learned what pacifists and pushovers the ISOers are?

A genuine communist organization sponsoring such a rally would have taken pains to organize a serious defense; it would certainly have mobilized left and working-class forces in advance. But the ISO, politically opportunist but organizationally sectarian, has a long history of excluding left political opponents (like the LRP) from their public meetings. They would never ask our help in advance to defend a rally even when the likelihood of trouble was obvious.

Tactically, if the ISO could not defend the meeting they should have found another location or called it off. At the very least they were obliged to warn the audience that suspicious people were taking pictures, so that anyone who didn't want to be photographed by cops or thugs could have left the premises. The ISO made sure that its own Greek comrades got safely out of the way, but they made no attempt to warn other immigrants or Greek leftists who might have been at risk.

The ISO's mewling about "democratic rights" while enemies of those rights in the Balkans took over their meeting is the logical conclusion of their opportunist quest for middle-class respectability. Rather than building on the anger and hatred of capitalism among the most oppressed workers, they try to attract academics, union bureaucrats and others who would never dirty their hands with class warfare. Revolutionary workers and students will come to see the ISO for what it is — an open road to bourgeois reaction and a roadblock to the building of a real communist party.

revolution" was damaging to the working class even though it helped defend the "workers' state." (See *Proletarian Revolution* Nos. 36 and 38.) When you are guided by a theory that has to weigh the "positive" and negative aspects of counterrevolution, you are lost from the start.

In Yugoslavia, LRCI defended Croatia and Slovenia's right to self-determination and secession. But it also supported self-determination for the Serbian enclaves inside Croatia. Such logic would lead to an endless series of diminishing statelets: what about Croatian villages within the Serbian enclaves, and so on? Moreover, although Serbs have been oppressed in Croatia and many were justifiably frightened by the threats and fascistic ties of Croatian leader Franjo Tudjman, by lining up with Milosevic they became tools of Serbian domination. The Serbian forces in Croatia were armed and organized by the pro-Serbian federal army and fought as the latter's auxiliary. And their conquests have by no means been limited to areas of Serbian settlement.

The point is that there is no conceivable nationalist solution in Yugoslavia. The savage Yugoslav war shows that asserting national rights by drawing borders between intermingled peoples leads to mass expulsions and slaughter. Leninists support the right to self-determination in order to defend the oppressed from domination and to break the masses from their nationalist leaders, not to encourage divisions. The only real solution is an internationalist proletarian struggle against capitalism. Defense of self-determination is essential because proletarian unity must be based on the equality of peoples.

LRCI originally refused to defend Bosnia; until recently it opposed all sides in this "reactionary civil war," as at the

Vienna rally. The Bosnian Muslim leaders, it said, were allied with Croatia, which was backed by imperialism and a threat to its own Serbian minority. But now LRCI claims that imperialism inverted its policy over the summer and opposes intervention. Moreover, this led to a Serb-Croat bloc in Bosnia against the Muslims. So "the Muslim's struggle changed into a war of justified resistance against ethnic annihilation" and merits support. (*Workers Power*, Dec. 1992.)

Accordingly, LRCI at last calls for working-class organizations to support the Muslim forces militarily. But it still recognizes no right of the Muslims to self-determination since they "do not form an identifiable majority in a continuous compact area." This formula, apparently based on Stalin's definition of a nation, is used here as a bureaucratic precept that ignores the key question of mass consciousness — in contrast with the views of Lenin and Trotsky.

The LRCI position also assumes that Bosnian self-determination means Muslim self-determination. In fact many "Muslims" are non-religious and prefer to be known as Yugoslavs or Bosnians; they are a largely urban population, living among Serbs and Croats who also regard themselves as Bosnians. Even in the villages, the first victims of Serbian ethnic cleansing are often other Serbs who oppose the terror against their neighbors. Islamic identity is in many cases being forced on "Muslims" by the oppression against them.

LRCI is on the right side for the moment, but its method is nonsense. First, Croatia is playing a double game: it is fighting the Muslims to carve out a piece of Bosnia for itself and at the same time fighting the Bosnian Serbs to reduce their enclave. Second, Serbia has all along proclaimed its goal of territorial expansion, i.e., subjecting the nations

around it and whipping up chauvinism as a weapon. Thus the war has been one of "ethnic cleansing" from the start.

Most important is LRCI's misreading of imperialism. It seems to have forgotten that while Germany and Austria backed Slovenia and Croatia against Serbia, the U.S., Britain and France originally favored Yugoslav unity — they supported Serbian domination. Only now is the West talking of military intervention. If imperialism has indeed changed its mind it is in the opposite direction from what LRCI asserts. In fact, however, the current imperialist "solution," the Vance-Owen plan for dividing Bosnia into ethnic enclaves, will encourage further cleansing and preserve the bulk of Serbian conquests. It is a continuation of pro-Serbian "non-intervention" by other means.

The two organizations whose politics we have dissected

claim to be fighting for socialism. But centrists who cannot free themselves from the nationalists' clutches — either because their perspective demands opportunist blocs or because their analysis leaves them sympathetic to stratified capitalist regimes — are part of the problem, not the solution.

The original error of imagining "workers' states" where there were no workers' revolutions has led to the edge of lunacy. Not only can the centrists not tell a workers' state — the hope of humanity — from a bourgeois state that defends inhumanity; they can't tell a working-class united front from a bloc with the worst chauvinist swine. The Stalinists have sullied the name of communism for decades. Now centrists, weaving torturous blocs with various ethnic cleansers, serve only to foul the banner even more and make Marxism seem like the sheerest opportunism. ●

Spartacists Terminate Russian "Workers' State" Not with a Bang but a Whimper

by Walter Daum

The Spartacists have finally given up on the Russian "workers' state." Their verdict that Yeltsin's regime is now capitalist was announced in both the November 27 *Workers Vanguard* and the Winter *Spartacist*; the new line was adopted "in late fall" and credited to a September document by their International Communist League (ICL).

This means that for months the Spartacists neglected to mention that "Defense of the Soviet Union," for decades their central programmatic imperative, was no longer operative. Russia, which they thought until yesterday was still the workers' state created by the watershed event of the century, the Bolshevik revolution, had now been smashed by counter-revolution. But they kept this monumental event a secret.

This backhanded method echoes their tardy discovery that Poland had turned capitalist in December 1990, first divulged in March 1992. It also recalls the revelation in the early 1950's by the leader of the degenerating Fourth International, Michel Pablo, that a swath of "deformed workers' states" had been created across East Europe years before. These alleged proletarian conquests had been unnoticed by the Trotskyists at the time and not even claimed as workers' states by their Stalinist rulers.

Now the major pseudo-workers' state has been belatedly made to vanish, again without a bloody counterrevolution or even a major turnover in ruling-class personnel. Once again the Pabloite theory has proved itself useless — as well as totally incompatible with Marxism. It creates "workers' states" without revolutions and de-creates them without counterrevolutions. Such wizardry is the opposite of science.

WHERE'S THE TURNING POINT?

The LRP's Marxist alternative has long recognized that the Stalinist counterrevolution, culminating in the purges of the late 1930's, overthrew the Soviet workers' state and established stratified capitalism. That system, warped by the socialistic remnants of the workers' state it usurped, expanded after World War II by smashing workers' upsurges but is now collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions and the world capitalist crisis.

In two lengthy articles, the Spartacists can find no decisive event to mark a bourgeois counterrevolution. First they cite Yeltsin's seizure of power in August 1991, only to dismiss it as inconclusive. How convenient: given their theory

and their diatribes against those who saw the attempted coup by the "State Emergency Committee" as the immediate danger to the working class, the ICL should have supported the putsch as a necessary if inadequate defense of the "workers' state." But they flinched and offered no support. So now they can't declare Yeltsin's triumph a turning point: to do so would condemn themselves.

Then comes a litany of nasty government acts: Yeltsin's police broke an air controllers' strike; an African student was killed by cops in Moscow; "tons of volumes" of Marx and Lenin's collected works were destroyed. Odious, yes, but these deeds pale in comparison to the crimes committed by Stalin when he liquidated the real workers' state.

Desperate for something substantial, the Spartacists focus on Yeltsin's appointment of the "rabidly nationalist" Pavel Grachev as defense minister in May 1992. But their own source, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, notes that Grachev and other new military leaders were "shaped by their experience in Afghanistan," resisted the break-up of the USSR, and are opposed to the liberal reformers in Yeltsin's cabinet. (*Post-Soviet East European Report*, Aug. 18, 1992.) Hardly the types to overthrow Stalinism!

The ICL's feeble justification for their new line proves they can't tell the difference between capitalist and workers' states. Sure, it's hard to accept Yeltsin as a proletarian president. But were Brezhnev, Andropov and the pro-West Gorbachev really qualitatively better? The new line amounts to another flinch: refusing to defend what for the ICL should still be a workers' state.

Moreover, in all the pages wasted on the question there is nothing about the class nature of the non-Russian states in the ex-USSR. The question is not trivial: Ukraine, for one, has a powerful working class with an outstanding revolutionary history. Nor are we told whether Russia is now imperialist. Which side are you on if war breaks out between capitalist Russia and, say, perhaps-not-yet-capitalist Moldova?

THE REAL COUNTERREVOLUTION

Any real communist would take seriously the consequences of a new theoretical line. But the Spartacists are just playing games. Disdainful of both theory and peoples, their attempt to detect a bourgeois counterrevolution reads like whimpering excuses of tired leftists throwing in the towel.

In 1977 the Spartacists aptly mocked the Maoists for

claiming that Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956 had done away with the Soviet "workers' state":

The overthrow of the feudal order by the European bourgeoisie involved centuries of civil wars, revolutions and counterrevolutions; likewise, the struggle of the proletariat against the capitalist class has wracked bourgeois society for over a century. Yet the Maoists would have us believe that a development of world-historic significance — the restoration of capitalism in the USSR — took place through a bloodless palace coup, and was not even noticed as such by anyone, not even Mao himself, until several years later! (*Why the USSR is Not Capitalist.*)

Now it's the Spartacists who would have us believe in a bloodless restoration, and they're no better at blindman's bluff. Poland took them fifteen months to recognize, Russia somewhat less. A "theory" that "predicts" only events that have already happened is the punishment in practice for rejecting Marxist analysis.

To imagine a peaceful counterrevolution, as Trotsky often noted, is to accept the theory of reformism backwards. The fundamental Marxist understanding that states don't turn from the rule of one class to another without being overthrown is rejected as an "overdrawn analogy" by Trotsky. This sneer comes in a discussion of how East Europe was going capitalist. But in the USSR, the Spartacists argued at the time, "it is likely that the attempt to restore capitalism will be accompanied by a civil war." (*Spartacist*, Winter 1990-91.) Now they have abandoned even this shred of Trotskyism.

The real counterrevolution, over fifty years ago, slaughtered millions and smashed the state apparatus — the army general staff, the internal security bureaus and the party-government hierarchy. Trotsky called it a preventive civil war: it took war to snuff out an enfeebled but genuine workers' state. He well understood the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism; he did not see, however, that the political counterrevolution finally concluded in a social counterrevolution. Our theory of statified capitalism, taking up where Trotsky left off, predicted long ago the disintegration of Stalinist power and the bourgeoisification of the Stalinist economies.

Trying to maintain some Marxist cover, the Spartacists

bring up what they used to call a tenth-rate question when we raised it: that "proletarian power depends principally on *consciousness* and *organization* of the working class." But this truth only shows how dishonest and unserious the new theory is. Stalin & Co.'s counterrevolution did not exactly leave the Soviet workers' consciousness and organization intact. (The Trotskyists, the vanguard of proletarian consciousness, were decimated.) What happened to the workers' state then?

Post-World War II Stalinist power was established without working-class participation, often by destroying workers' gains in order to restore capitalist property. It was only after the workers' upsurges and independent organizations were crushed that the Stalinists dared statify property. If proletarian consciousness and organization are crucial, how did these become workers' states of any kind?

DEFEND STATIFIED PROPERTY!

The Spartacists' new openly reformist stance yields appropriately reactionary conclusions. They denounce a faction in their British section for advocating "defense of nationalized property per se in Poland, which by common consent at the time was no longer a deformed workers state." (*Spartacist*, Winter 1992-3.)

Not to defend state property in Poland is a criminal policy. The issue is concrete: when the Polish state under the anti-Stalinist Walesa (as under the Stalinist Jaruzelski before him) tried to sell off factories and shipyards to wipe out jobs, wages and benefits, the workers fought back. Now the ICL says that nationalized property under such conditions is not to be defended from a capitalist state!

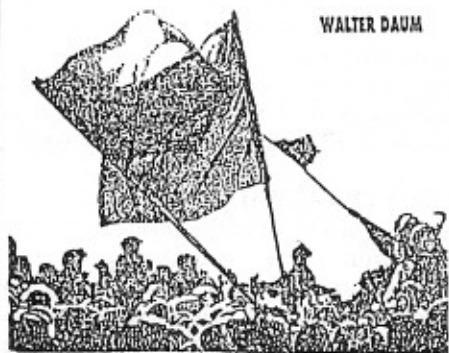
In Poland and the other ex-Stalinist states, even though they were capitalist all along, state property embodied concrete working-class gains ultimately derived from the Bolshevik revolution. Generalized state property was made possible only by the Russian workers' revolution, even though it was later usurped by the ruling bureaucracy.

Under any form of capitalism, statification of property is a two-edged sword. Designed to free the productive forces from the anarchy of competition, it also undermines the sanctity of private property (hence the Reagan/Thatcher cam-

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Communist Review

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paign against it) and, as Trotsky pointed out, offers the proletariat "too tempting an object for social revolution." That's one reason the Transitional Program calls for statification of banking and expropriation of vital industries.

Following Trotsky, we consider statified property a proletarian property form even when it retains a bourgeois content. (The Spartacists used to say so too, but apparently for them only Stalinist state property is proletarian.) For Marxists, principles remain true even when there are limited exceptions. There are of course times when a state will nationalize property in order to set back working-class struggles. And certainly the accumulation of property in the hands of an exploiting state does not bring about socialism, despite what reformists believe. But the principle remains that we defend nationalized property from bourgeois attacks.

Communists defend state property under statified capitalism, even though it does not mean working-class state power in itself. But we do not defend the Stalinist states that undermined and then abandoned the workers' gains. (Just as in defending British railroads and mines from privatization we do not defend the Queen or the bourgeois state.) To defend the Stalinist state is what the "deformed workers' state" theory teaches; it helped put the Spartacists so often on the anti-worker side of the class struggle.

Why do the Spartacists say defending state property is wrong? Because it would "tend to mislead the Polish proletariat to abandon the revolutionary struggle to regain power, in favor of reformist concerns over which type of capitalist austerity is preferable."

This is rich, coming from people who long denied the fact of austerity under Stalinism; who hold that the Polish workers gained state power in the 1940's without a revolutionary struggle; and who think that "regaining power" means salvaging Stalinism. In reality, to achieve the consciousness of its own strength necessary to win state power, the proletariat will have to fight against the austerity campaign — and stopping privatization is a critical battle.

The Spartacists' deformed theory puts them in the same camp as Tony Cliff's International Socialists, who labeled the East European privatizations a "step sideways" and did not oppose them. The two groups are middle-class birds of a feather. As Trotsky often observed, those who cannot defend the proletariat's past gains will never achieve new ones.

On the subject of defending nationalized property and workers' states, we recall that in 1979, when China invaded Vietnam, the Spartacists urged the USSR to stop China, demanding that the "Soviet nuclear shield cover Hanoi." (*Workers Vanguard*, March 2, 1979.) To our knowledge, the Spartacists are the only "Trotskyists" who ever called for a nuclear attack on a "workers' state."

DEFENDING STALINISTS

The Spartacists have continually sided with the Stalinists against the workers because they saw the ruling bureaucrats, not the proletariat, as the backbone of the "workers' states." The logic of this method is to bloc with the bosses when the classes conflict. Accordingly, they defended the Polish Stalinists' suppression of the 10-million-member Solidarnosc movement in 1981 — such devotion to workers' consciousness and organization! The crackdown had a devastating effect: by removing the threat of workers' revolution, it paved the way for a deal between the capitulatory Walesa leadership of Solidarnosc, the Church and the Stalinists. The Spartacists share responsibility for the present pro-bourgeois regime.

Lately they campaigned in defense of Erich Honecker, the former head of East Germany. Honecker and other Stal-



'Defend the Gains of October.' Genuine communists must defend workers' gains, not Stalinist counterrevolution.

inists were put on trial by the German government, accused of complicity in the shooting of people trying to escape his walled borders. Of course, the German bourgeoisie has no right to condemn Honecker: it sustained his regime for many years. But the Spartacists do more than protest this hypocritical revenge. Honecker, they plead, "allegedly" issued orders that led to the deaths of only "an average of seven people per year." (*Workers Vanguard*, Jan. 29.) It is Stalinist butchery they defend, not just bourgeois injustice.

On the level of "theory," the Spartacists are also apologists for the workers' enemies. For years they said the Soviet economy was free of systemic crises, one that "insures the rapid and steady growth of productive forces"; indeed, the social structure of Russia under Lenin was "far more conducive to capitalist restoration" than under Brezhnev. (*Why the USSR is Not Capitalist.*)

In 1989 they rejoiced that the Jaruzelski-Walesa coalition regime in Poland had not restored capitalism, on the grounds that the Stalinists still controlled the army and police. But as we foresaw, this "barrier" to Walesa turned into Walesa's weapon against the workers. Two years ago the ICL said that the "reforming" East German Stalinists would defend nationalized property, only to have to admit later that the CP had indeed surrendered to West German imperialism.

THE RUSSIAN QUESTION SUMMED UP

History has now settled the long-debated "Russian question." Nothing in any version of the deformed workers' state theory accounts for the collapse of Stalinism in the face of crisis-ridden world capitalism. The allegedly progressive Stalinist system proved to be backward and reactionary, even as a form of capitalism. It was hated by the workers, who

rose up against it time and again.

The Polish workers' uprising of 1980-81 showed the Stalinists their days were numbered and led to the "reforms" and capitulation to Western imperialism symbolized by Gorbachev. The working masses were decisive in the final overthrow of the old regimes, but the leadership was hijacked by bourgeois politicians. Nevertheless, the collapse of Stalinism is no tragedy for the working class: it means the elimination of an obstacle standing in the way of revolutionary proletarian organization and consciousness. The foremost task of the

workers' movement remains the construction of revolutionary parties, the re-creation of the Fourth International.

The point of debating the Russian question was never just to determine the class nature of the Soviet Union. It was to re-establish the centrality of the proletariat for socialism. Leftists for whom workers' consciousness is an excuse for surrender — and who believed that the proletariat's role was to be shot down in the name of defending pseudo-workers' states — were class enemies, not much different from the Stalinists and social democrats they imitated. ●

Marxism and Indigenous Struggles

The following document, "Marxism and the Indigenous Struggles against Colonizers in the Progressive Epoch of Capitalism," was adopted by the Central Committee of the LRP in October 1992. It has been edited for publication.

1. National Liberation Struggles

There is no question that communists generally support national liberation struggles in the present epoch of capitalist decay. There has been considerable controversy, however, over retrospective policy toward such struggles in the first, progressive, epoch of capitalism, especially the initial struggles against European conquests. The question has been debated by Stalinists, "third-worldists," Social Democratic chauvinists and centrist muddleheads, as well as authentic communists.

In the present epoch the Marxist defense of national struggles is not based on any expectation that they will lead to the creation of economically independent, cohesive, viable nations. Generally speaking that is impossible in this epoch of imperialism. It is no accident that the national revolutions which broke out in the wake of the Second World War, under pro-capitalist misleaderships of both Stalinist and non-Stalinist varieties, never overcame the bonds of imperialism. Today the once rebellious ex-colonial and semi-colonial countries are openly relapsing into neo-colonial patterns. Nationalism has betrayed the aspirations of the masses for liberation, equality and a human standard of living.

Today bourgeois nationalism and its goal of national autarky are fundamentally reactionary and counterrevolutionary, because a real alternative exists. Scarcity, which has bedeviled humanity from the beginning and is the source of all class divisions, can finally be eliminated. There is an international economy enveloping the world. The forces of production have developed to the point where they are potentially capable of feeding, clothing and housing all the world's people. The reason why humanity today still groans under the burden of impoverishment is that this productive capacity remains under the ownership and control of the capitalist class: the imperialists and their servants.

The only real and lasting success for anti-imperialist rebellions lies with the triumph of the proletarian socialist revolution and the creation of internationally federated workers' states — not only in the superexploited neo-colonies but in the decisive heartlands of capitalism, the imperialist countries themselves.

2. Capitalism and the Productive Forces

In its progressive epoch, capitalism's development of the productive forces laid the basis for a future society of abundance and equality — the classless communist society we aim for. This development demanded the smashing of pre-capitalist political, social and economic restraints. In

Europe this meant that communists participated in the early bourgeois democratic revolutions against feudalism; it meant supporting the establishment of nation-states in which capitalism could shelter, advance and accumulate. However, in order to develop, capitalism had to expand beyond national borders, beyond Europe — and eventually to dominate the globe.

Suprahistorical moralists and moral absolutists attracted to nationalism have little trouble declaring their uncritical, patronizing support for all indigenous movements against West European penetration. This often leads to apologies for backwardness and reactionary, inhuman conditions — as long as they are "native." But present-day Marxists, conscious of the need to support the growth of the productive forces at a time when there was no alternative but capitalism to accomplish this, have lacked a clear response to ahistorical moralism even when correctly condemning it. Communists' natural identification with struggles of the oppressed has made the "productive forces" position difficult to defend without further clarification.

3. Marx and Engels

Marx and Engels, while they attacked the brutality of colonialism as well as bourgeois exploitation and oppression in general, supported the spread of capitalism in the "New World" and elsewhere beyond Western Europe. This was a necessary step in the march forward led by the economically advanced countries. Marx supported the United States in its military adventure into Mexico in 1847. Lenin says that Marx later corrected this position but gives little direct evidence.

But their views on national struggles for liberation evolved over time. The clearest example was the Irish struggle. In coming to the position of all-out support to the rebellion for independence from Britain, they eventually saw Irish freedom as the key to the revolution in Britain itself. In general, they concluded that a people that held another in subjugation could not free itself. But that seemed to mean to them that, in most cases, successful socialist revolutions in the advanced countries would help develop the colonial lands and in the future liberate them. Nevertheless, Marx did indicate that an indigenous revolution might be necessary in India, as it surely was in Ireland.

Contrary to Stalinist and other pseudo-Marxist schematists who think every country must go through each stage of development, Marx did not believe that the backward countries would have to recapitulate national capitalism as in the West. On the whole, however, it is fair to say that Marx left no clear political evaluation as to how to deal with the national question in colonial areas. Lenin, basing himself on Marx's methodology, had to clarify the communist position in order to rescue it from the pseudo-Marxists of his time. We face a similar need today.

4. The Proletariat and its Predecessors

Our re-examination of the Marxist method and the national question has been inspired by contemporary, worldwide mass upheavals, those of the proletariat in particular. We therefore pose the problem somewhat differently than has been done in the past.

The expansion of the productive forces was indeed progressive and necessary. Pre-capitalist chokeholds on economic advance had to be broken. Once begun, this expansion was massive and powerful. During its initial periods of expansion,



it confronted a wide range of peoples. Given the conditions of the time, a universal, internationally united resistance that could halt bourgeois expansion was inconceivable.

Thus the indigenous struggles which broke out (or could have broken out) were inevitably local; at most they were carried out by regional combinations of peoples. As such they could not constitute an effective barrier to world development. And only in a few cases could they succeed; most were doomed by superior technology.

But the advance of the productive forces is not simply, or even primarily, a technological question. It is the historical and social development of the productive process as a whole. Within this process, the key force of production to be developed was the proletariat. Of course, the proletariat could not develop in the absence of other social and technological forces, but for Marxists the proletariat is decisive for creating the world of the future. The proletariat must develop not only numerically, organizationally and culturally; it must also become class conscious in the course of struggle, learn how to achieve its revolutionary mission and fit itself for power.

The modern proletariat is the inheritor of the gains and struggles of oppressed peoples and exploited classes throughout history. Many of these gains are embodied in some form in existing institutions. Some even exist as laws wrested from the ruling class and offering limited protection for popular rights. The lessons learned from struggle survive in popular culture, history books and in Marxist strategic guidelines.

Marxists have supported struggles that carried no guarantee of success, even some that were doomed from the

start. The proletariat learns even from defeats. Often defeat in battle is far superior to peaceful acceptance of oppression — even for the people involved, to say nothing of future generations. For example, Marx's reservations about the Paris Commune did not prevent his wholehearted support; even in defeat, that uprising taught decisive lessons about the difference between reform of the state and revolution.

Therefore, in general we retrospectively support the struggles of indigenous peoples against capitalist conquest. Our support has nothing in common with moralism but is

based solely on the importance of mass movements of the oppressed and exploited throughout history for the cause of the modern proletariat.

5. Qualifications

As historical materialists, we qualify our support in specific ways:

a) We favor conducting the early anti-colonial struggles so as to undermine and (if possible) destroy all reactionary indigenous rulers, customs and institutions that stood as a bar to the advance of the productive forces. The only successful revolts, in the long run, would have been those that adapted the technology and social organization of the advanced countries. Japan provides an example. Of course, as the conquest of the "Indians" in the U.S. shows, even such adaptations could not insure success, given the racism, superior numbers and weaponry of the conquerors.

b) Where indigenous struggles served the interest of reactionary forces actually capable of inflicting decisive setbacks to the development of the productive forces, we give no support to so-called national struggles. Thus we believe Marx was essentially correct in opposing self-determination for the Eastern European peoples (aside from Poland and Hungary) at a time when their victory would have bolstered Russian Czarism at the expense of all progressive forces in Europe. Pan-Slavism in the mid-19th century was a powerful enough force in the hands of reaction to endanger further capitalist development as well as the struggles of the European proletariat as a whole. ●

Malcolm X

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another "role model" sermon of the "get your shit together and you can make it" variety. The reality of life today makes more and more Black youth understand America better than Spike Lee does. They won't find the way out from Lee, but they could understand the issues and learn some of the important answers by coming to grips with the real Malcolm.

THE MOVEMENT IS MISSING

The Horatio Alger morality play demands that Lee emphasize Malcolm's personal, as opposed to political, struggle against racism. So in a movie which runs chronologically, it makes sense that the early portions outlining Malcolm's childhood, hustling and prison days are strongest. There is less political material here to mangle, while some of the most pungent examples of racism that Malcolm discusses are brought out in sensitive detail: for example, the separating of Malcolm's family by the state, and a racist school teacher's scuttling of Malcolm's desire to be a lawyer.

But despite the high points, the time devoted to Malcolm's early life is excessive. Even the attempt to capture the cultural style and flavor of the times, one of the movie's strongest suits, is taken to annoying extremes. For example, the Roseland scene is undoubtedly meant to capture the feel of lindy-hopping that Malcolm describes. But the extended, choreographed dancing acts more like a Broadway musical, a substitute for the real panorama of everyday Black life and culture that produced Malcolm.

To be most revealing, the early scenes should have been presented as a springboard for the politically decisive years. After all, Malcolm's fame, the reason to even make a movie about him, comes from the growing recognition of the relevance of what he was saying about the social struggle. Instead, the early years are presented as part of Malcolm's dogged personal effort to fight his way upward.

The civil rights struggles and the emerging ghetto rebellions of the 1960's, so important to Malcolm's evolution toward political activism, are minimized. The result is a spectacular treatment, heroic and personalistic, which not only diminishes Malcolm's political role but belittles the monumental deeds of the Black masses.

It is also irritating to watch Lee's doctored material: the made-up bar scene where Malcolm smashes a bottle over a tough-talking dude; Malcolm's conversion to the Nation of Islam by a fellow prisoner, when in reality that was done by his brother Reginald, etc. For the sake of truth and the interest of drama, the real versions would have done fine.

MALCOLM'S POLITICAL EVOLUTION

The movie's latter half, from the growing conflicts within the Nation of Islam to Malcolm's assassination, is a particular letdown. The major events are covered, and snippets of Malcolm's political evolution are offered, but very sketchily. The incredible ferment in his conceptions, his increasing activism and exploring of political relations and the growing social struggles that provided inspiration for these changes are given short shrift. Lee chooses not to switch gears even here; he sticks with his micro-personalistic approach.

It is important to outline Malcolm's political development, especially for those unaware of it even after seeing the movie. As Adolph Reed Jr. pointed out in the *Progressive*,

Perhaps the most striking thing about X is how it slides over the source of Malcolm's prominence as a figure in American life — his running critique of the civil rights movement and its leadership. Lee rushes past the tension, depicting it primarily in a couple of passing, oblique images . . .

Malcolm's activism, his willingness to take on the white authorities, was as responsible as anything else for his split from the Nation of Islam. Yet the film only refers to his reaction to Elijah Muhammad's personal corruption and the jealousies of other ministers.

In life but not in the film, after leaving the NOI, Malcolm revealed his shame over having met with the Ku Klux Klan as Elijah Muhammad's representative; he noted that "from that day onward, the Klan never interfered with the Black Muslim movement in the South." One would think that Lee's hostility to racism would have angered him enough not to pass off a political crime as a personal peccadillo. After all, the logic persists: Louis Farrakhan, head of the NOI today, tried to forge an alliance in 1985 with Tom Metzger, former Klan leader and a prominent Nazi.

In life but not in the film, Malcolm's departure from the NOI opened up a new political vista, a whole period of intense, creative coming to grips with the upheavals going on across the world. Shortly afterwards he made his famous pilgrimage to Mecca and his announcement that whites were not all inherently evil. But this was only one factor in his changing political understanding.

Malcolm became more involved with the issues of the civil rights struggles that the Nation had stayed aloof from. He weighed tactical alliances with civil rights leaders that he would have never considered before. But he remained adamantly opposed to liberalism and condemned the pacifist and pro-Democratic strategy of integrationists like Martin Luther King. He correctly saw the Democratic Party as a deathtrap for Black people because of its pretense of working in the interest of the oppressed.

Spike Lee's rendition is wrong not only in that it minimizes Malcolm's political journey in favor of his personal ascension; not only in that it seeks to confine his message within the limits of bourgeois society rather than in revolutionary opposition to it. It is also wrong because its "role model" approach is closely linked to the implicit message that Blacks should look to a Great Man on Horseback for deliverance. This messianic theme has been one of the banes of the Black struggle historically.

MALCOLM AND CAPITALISM

Nevertheless, Lee's version of Malcolm is not made up out of whole cloth. For much of his adult life, Malcolm was a leader of the Nation of Islam, which rejected political activity in general and revolutionary politics in particular. Malcolm idolized Elijah Muhammad as Allah's Messenger who would deliver Blacks from captivity by white devils.

Our point is that Malcolm clearly strained against these constrictions always, and that he broke with them decisively after his split. Like its ancestors, Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey, the NOI advocated a free enterprise outlook: Blacks must pick themselves up by their bootstraps by forming their own businesses and hiring other Blacks. There is no record of Malcolm specifically rejecting this approach, and this lends support to Lee's case. Yet there is considerable evidence that, before his assassination, Malcolm was grappling with the question of the capitalist road in general.

In that period, Malcolm (or El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz,

as he now called himself) refined his opposition to white racism, seeking an institutional rather than a spiritual basis for it. Increasingly he saw its connection to the social system, pointing out that "you can't have capitalism without racism." He wanted to build a political alternative, in his mind a revolutionary one, making clear this wasn't some sort of militant reformism:

I shall tell them what a real revolution means — the French Revolution, the American Revolution, Algeria, to name a few. There can be no revolution without bloodshed, and it is nonsense to describe the civil rights movement as a revolution. It is going to be different now. I'm going to join in the fight wherever Negroes ask for my help, and I suspect my activities will be on a greater and more intensive scale than in the past. (George Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X*, p. 10.)

He began exploring socialism, and observed: It's impossible for a white person to believe in capitalism and not believe in racism. . . . And if you find one and you happen to get that person into a conversation and they have a philosophy that makes you sure they don't have their racism in their outlook, usually they're socialists or their political philosophy is socialism. (*Malcolm X Speaks*, p. 69.)



The Lee Lie: star-spangled Spike at New York prison. The real Malcolm refused loyalty to imperialist, racist U.S.

Malcolm saw a profound relationship between struggles in America and abroad. At a speech at the end of 1964 at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem (where he would later be assassinated), he stated:

It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the Negro as simply a racial conflict of black against white, or as a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the

exploited against the exploiter.

In this regard, it was his position that "all of the countries that are emerging today from under the shackles of colonialism are turning toward socialism."

Malcolm maintained almost to the end his belief in Black nationalism. But under the impact of all the changes, he brought even this into question. From a 1965 interview:

So I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising of my definition of black nationalism. Can we sum up the solution to the problems confronting our people as black nationalism? And if you noticed, I haven't been using the expression for several months. But I still would be hard pressed to give a specific definition of the overall philosophy which I think is necessary for the liberation of black people in this country.

In short, Malcolm was groping towards a revolutionary internationalist and interracialist solution to Black liberation and capitalist misery. But while many pieces of the political puzzle were falling into place, Malcolm had not become a communist revolutionary by the time of his death. Above all, he didn't see the working class as the key to the social struggles, including Black liberation.

We have got to get our problems solved first and then if there's anything left to work on the white man's problems, good, but I think one of the mistakes Negroes make is this worker solidarity thing. There's no such thing — it didn't even work in Russia. (*The Last Year of Malcolm X*, p. 20.)

Malcolm had illusions in African rulers who proclaimed themselves socialist opponents of racist imperialism but who in reality led nations that had never really broken from the imperial world order. He still held unjustified hopes in the capacity of the United Nations to aid the oppressed in the U.S. and abroad. His continued adherence to religion also took its toll: for example, Islam gave him an unfounded hope in the openly reactionary Saudi Arabian regime.

Malcolm wasn't gulled into viewing the USSR or other Stalinist countries as saviors, as did most leftists of the period. Still, he was a product of his times. It is not hard to see why even so perceptive a leader and social critic failed to see workers' solidarity as an answer to capitalism and racism.

By and large, the big working-class leaders in the U.S., the labor officials, were no friends of the Black struggle. Many still discriminated in their own unions, while others, nominally anti-racist, waged no fight against their racist fellow bureaucrats. Those who declared in favor of civil rights were part of the "Negro-Liberal-Labor Alliance" that was a conservative brake on the radicalizing Black struggle. The Black Power current, inspired by Malcolm X, split with the integrationists out of hostile reaction to this alliance.

The union bureaucrats not only failed to fight racism; they were also busy undermining the growing working-class struggles against capitalism's deepening attacks. Thus they stimulated the growth of racism among angry white workers who turned against Blacks as scapegoats for their job and income losses. Given the policies of the working-class misleaders, it is no wonder that Malcolm did not reach a Marxist understanding of the proletariat's potential.

MALCOLM'S MURDER

In ancient Greek drama, the great protagonists were rendered tragic by virtue of some profound contradiction in their personalities. As far as we know, the contradictions that Malcolm wrestled with were social and political, not personal flaws. His murder made him a figure of tragedy — high tragedy, since he was the one major figure whose understanding, direction and rapport with the masses might have led

him to further resolve the contradictions and help overcome the impasse the Black struggle faced.

Lee understates the tragedy of Malcolm's assassination. It is very likely that the U.S. government played a behind-the-scenes role in the killing. But there is no doubt that the NOI, including Farrakhan, whipped up the venom leading to Malcolm's murder — and that Nation members actually pulled the triggers. Yet in Lee's account, Elijah Muhammad and the NOI get off easily; Farrakhan isn't even mentioned.

The main reason behind Lee's interpretation is that Lee himself has an affinity for nationalism; that's why Malcolm's departure from this view is never mentioned. The ostensible goal of Black nationalism is to create a separate nation-state — or at least separate self-ruled communities. But in practice nationalist groups have tried instead to build a separate Black economy based on small businesses. Lee's own life as well as his films reflects his partiality for the more or less separate, identifiably Black business end of "nationalism," as opposed to the ideological goal.

Another reason, closely tied to the first, is that Lee's vision of a unified Black community not only leads him to downplay criticism of the Nation; it extends to the minimization of criticism even of integrationists like King. Whereas the film cites Malcolm's perhaps transient embrace of Black enterprise notions, Malcolm's blistering attacks on integrationism and bourgeois lifestyle are ignored. For example:

Only a few thousands of Negroes, relatively a very tiny number, are taking part in "integration." Here, again, it is those few bourgeois Negroes, rushing to throw away their little money in the white man's luxury hotels, his swanky nightclubs, and big, fine exclusive restaurants. (*Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p. 276.)

Of course, Lee, like the nationalists (including the earlier Malcolm X), emphasizes a separate Black economy with a distinct Black bourgeoisie. But in concrete American conditions, such a set-up would at best be an internal dependency of the industrial and financial interests of the imperialist U.S., with the tiny Black bourgeoisie totally subordinate to white capitalism.

Not only could the goals of Black equality and power not be achieved; the road projected by Lee's Horatio X is unreal even for the few Blacks who still imagine they can climb high in bourgeois America. Most Black businessmen still work in white-owned corporations. Most "separate" businesses are

tied to white financiers, suppliers and customers. Even Spike Lee, who has far more leverage than most, exercises his independence more in terms of style than by creating any distinct economic institution.

It is impossible to read or hear Malcolm X's speeches without realizing his genius in popular propaganda and agitation. He took theoretical propositions and abstract truths and, through metaphor and example, made them easily comprehensible to Black working people. He was the opposite of a demagogue: he unmistakably thought it absolutely necessary that the masses themselves understand what conditions were, what lay behind them and what was to be done. More than many self-styled Marxists, he recognized the decisive importance of mass consciousness and action for the liberation struggle.

MALCOLM'S LEGACY

Malcolm's was determined to overcome the contradictions he was fighting his way through, not only for his own clarification, but for the masses' as well. This is the key to his evolution, the reason he had the possibility of transcending the limitations of both nationalism and integrationism.

Indeed, the masses did break out, in contrast to the failures of both variants of middle-class leadership. The ghettos did explode. And only through such revolutionary actions was the capitalist state forced to make concessions never won before.

Today, however, as can be seen ever more graphically, the inability of the ghetto revolts of that era to smash capitalism means that their own accomplishments are being destroyed. If the barriers of the labor bureaucracy on the one hand, and the middle-class wannabes on the other, had been overcome, then the situation would have been decisively different. Such a turn would have needed a developed revolutionary leadership, a proletarian party, leading increasingly conscious masses to a new society.

History has decreed that, as a result of their struggles and their position within the working class and society, Black people will be in the leadership of the future revolutionary workers' party in very large numbers. The greatness of Malcolm X was his potential to spearhead such a development. His tragedy was that this potential was cut short by murder. Yet the lessons he taught still furnish revolutionaries with a legacy on which to build.●

The Democratic Party: Graveyard of Black Struggles

A Proletarian Revolution Pamphlet by Sy Landy

These articles, reprinted from the press of the League for the Revolutionary Party, are concerned with the aspirations and actions of Black people as they have interacted with the electoral process. They analyze political campaigns spanning the decade 1983-1992, ranging over politicians from Harold Washington and Louis Farrakhan to Bill Clinton, with special attention to Jesse Jackson. They detail the role of the Democratic Party in absorbing and derailing struggles for equality and justice.

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Black Explosions Then and Now

by Sy Landy

In the late 1960's and early '70's, education in the United States took a great leap forward. Black people in the ghettos of America's cities learned their "three R's" and more, as never before. Instead of the pabulum spoon-fed in the schools designed to keep them in line and going nowhere, Black youth taught themselves real lessons about the real world. Venting their rage through Riot and Rebellion not only proved to be Righteous; it also produced Results.

The Black masses clearly sided with the civil rights struggle of the 1960's, but they kept a wary distance from the middle-class leaders and their strategies. What good were coalitions like the Negro-Labor-Liberal Alliance, hailed by the integrationist leaders as the hope of the future? They meant voting for the Democratic Party, but in return for what?

Unions still discriminated against Blacks and counselled

America's politicians, reflecting the needs of the capitalist class, had good reason to fear the inner-city revolts and the demands they were making. Even during the prosperity period, capitalism's Indian Summer, equality was not possible. The economy never generated enough for all, let alone abundance. Now the prosperity bubble was deflating; the mortal crisis of the system was returning to the surface of events with a vengeance. If the system was to be re-stabilized, past gains won by workers would have to be taken back.

FACTORY AND GHETTO TOGETHER

Yet here were millions of Blacks demanding more, not less. And as the ghettos boiled over, industrial workers were simmering in the factories. What's more, numbers of white workers were now following the lead of Blacks in strike actions. If the industrial unrest meshed with the ghetto



Malcolm X supporters protest planned demolition of Audubon Ballroom in New York, where he often spoke and was murdered.

them to be patient. Well-to-do liberals invited a few people of color to cocktail parties and counselled Blacks to be patient. Integrationist ministers and lawyers got their names in the papers. But for all the effort, exactly how had life in the ghettos changed at the bottom? Where were the jobs, the good pay and the real equality the leaders talked about but never delivered? The White House, the electoral alliance and even Martin Luther King, Jr. pleaded for patience, but patience had produced a nightmare, not a dream.

THE 1960'S UPRISINGS

So the ghettos exploded. All the government's men couldn't contain the blast. And all King's men couldn't restrain it either. The eruption was fueled not by rage alone but by hopes and expectations. After all, throughout the post-1968 world, working people across the globe were rising up and forcing the rulers to satisfy at least some of their demands. As well, the U.S. was still basking in the postwar prosperity, even if stormclouds were already gathering. Black workers, historically forced to the bottom of the ladder, could nevertheless look upward and still see the white working class and middle class doing well in comparison.

uprisings — plus the huge outcry against the U.S.'s imperialist war in Vietnam — the system would be in real danger.

But struggle is two-sided. The other side, the capitalists and their politicians, learned their lessons too. They recognized the reliability of their allies, the trade union bureaucrats. The bureaucracy, committed to maintaining capitalism, used its position at the head of the working class to beat back the tidal wave of wildcat strikes that broke out in the early '70's. It learned to divide the upheaval into isolated guerrilla actions in order to defeat them individually. So the enormously powerful working class, capable of shutting the entire economy down, "learned" to see itself as powerless.

To top it off, the still angry workers were informed by their leaders that salvation lay not in the direct class action that had won their past victories but in electoralism, passively voting for beneficent Democrats.

INTEGRATIONIST 'SOLUTIONS'

But when it came to the ghettos, the bourgeois politicians did not have such agents at their disposal. Neither the integrationist nor the nationalist misleaders had enough influence to restrain the Black revolts. But even though pros-

perity was ebbing, there was still some fat in the economy to be ceded to Blacks. Real opportunities had to be made available as a safety valve; jobs and education had to be granted. Of course, these gains went only to some; the system could never offer jobs to all workers or to all Blacks. What was promised was "equal opportunity," but the system hardly even began to deliver on that.

A structure of limited access, allocated through "affirmative action," "preferential hiring" and "community control" was set up. A Black leadership network of officials, dependent on expanded government welfare programs, was formed to channel the gains; it achieved some power in a still poverty-stricken community. Loyal to the system that bred it, it too counselled the masses to give up mass action in favor of electoralism and the Democrats.

Since the early 1970's, government has become increasingly dappled with Black faces. City after city elected Black mayors, and people of color have taken prominent posts in federal, state and municipal bureaucracies. Even reactionary politicians seemed to acknowledge Blacks' electoral strength and ceded positions to favorite conservative proteges.

THE FRUITS OF ELECTORALISM

Nevertheless, it soon became clear that the turn from ghetto revolt to electoralism meant growing job losses, falling real incomes and collapsing government services. These setbacks appeared to derive from the overall economic decline, not from a race-specific assault. While continuing discrimination could not be denied, layers of better-off Blacks believed there was a rough equality of deprivation: whites had to sacrifice too. If the Black working class was suffering disproportionately, that was seen as a "structural" legacy from past racism — coupled with the lamentable indifference of Reagan and Bush. There were still thousands of Black elected officials, and when the pendulum swung back to the Democrats, things would improve.

The Rodney King beating and the Simi Valley verdict blew the cover off the end-of-racism myth — not simply because the videotape captured a hideous instance of police brutality, but also because the trial made clear that vicious racism was still the everyday norm of American "justice." The Los Angeles riot that followed testified that Black and Latino masses recognized the lesson. They didn't wait for any politicians to make rhetorical amends; they picked up where they had left off years before and went into the streets.

The bourgeoisie also got the message. A significant section saw that Bush had gone too far by giving up even the semblance of racial inclusion. The L.A. upsurge proved that popular hostility to the economic hardships wreaked by Reagan-Bush had made possible a dangerous social explosion. If the ghetto explosions of the past were frightening, the implications today are terrifying for the capitalists: there are far fewer sops to give the masses.

The combination of Black anger and a rotting economy points to far greater unrest than twenty years ago. No wonder Los Angeles was the straw that broke Bush's back and sent capital into Clinton's camp. It seemed high time to switch to Clinton, a Democrat and pseudo-populist who could more convincingly keep peace in the inner cities — and at the same time more aggressively help squeeze more profits out of the workers.

THE NEW BLACK 'LEADERSHIP'

The Clinton administration has carefully cultivated an image of inclusiveness toward Blacks, as part of its emphasis on "diversity" and "pluralism." At the same time, it has sig-

nalled Blacks not to expect anything in the way of concrete gains. Although there are four Blacks in the cabinet, plus a Congressional Black Caucus that leaped from 26 to 40 members (some holding top committee chairmanships), the new Black leadership is hardly a fighting force for the ghettos.

When the campaign to involve Blacks in the electoral arena began, Black candidates ran as race champions vowing to get more for the masses. Yes, they were used as tokens by the ruling class, but they were tokens of greater recognition and a fairer proportion of the sops to be doled out. Militant talkers carried the message, "Pay off or the ghettos will rise again." As the economy declined and the number of Black officials grew, the militant image was still needed — as a cover for presiding over austerity.

THE RON BROWN SYNDROME

But it is a long way from Harold Washington to Ron Brown. Even Jesse Jackson making concession after concession (see *Proletarian Revolution* No. 31) has too militant an image for today's Democrats. Brown, a former flack for the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti and a well-connected Washington lobbyist, has more "movement" credentials than Clarence Thomas, but they have much in common, too.

Ron Brown's accession to the cabinet shows that the mainstream Black Democratic leadership has dropped its semi-dissident, early-Jesse Jackson pose and become junior partners in the capitalist state. The new leaders see their interests as identical with the imperialist bourgeoisie. Whereas Andrew Young, although a loyal member of Jimmy Carter's crew, still had to act as a boat-rocker, Brown is nothing more than ballast in Clinton's ship of state.

Reagan and Bush aimed to boost corporate profits while looting the declining economy. So the petty-bourgeois elements who served as militant vote gatherers for the Republicans could only be rewarded with social, not economic, promises. Thus the White House pushed "family values," anti-abortion, school prayer and flag-saluting. Clinton likewise offers his base abortion rights, role model inclusion in his cabinet of millionaires that "looks like America" and (maybe) gay rights in the military — because he too can't deliver any economic grease.

Such social issues cost little but feed the ideological needs of the middle-class activists who get out the vote for the Democrats. The upper layers who lead the organizations calling themselves the Black, women's and gay "movements" may take this stuff as good coin, but the masses will accept it only for the moment.

CAPITALISM AND RACISM

Even though the L.A. riot scared the bourgeoisie, such actions by themselves are not a definitive way out for the masses. Given the tremendous outpouring of angry workers — employed and unemployed, Black, Latino and even white — L.A. showed the potential of *class* action. But it also revealed another possibility — fratricidal warfare.

The traditional Democratic Party method of defending bourgeois democracy was to buy off and thereby incorporate the middle-class and petty-bourgeois misleaderships. Divisions within the working class were reinforced by awarding sops to diverse ethnic groups through their leaderships. The masses were led to identify with sectoral leaders and to hope that gains would be allotted to them or their children. Ethnic and other sectoral "special interest" groups had to compete with each other, thus breaking up potential class consciousness — and collaboration at the top bolstered the Democratic machine. Relegating the unions to the position of just

another special interest was key to keeping working-class demands in line. And whipping up racist hostility toward Blacks was a necessary cement for the white ethnic alliance.

Contrary to the "education" provided in the schools, the U.S. has had a history of monumental class struggle, as bloody as that of any country in the world. In the final analysis, American capitalism has maintained its sway through racism. Even in the 1970's, when the government began its sham promises to give Blacks a level playing field, it was no accident that working-class whites were steered to increasingly racist responses. Despite the working-class discontent of the period, the labor bureaucrats and Democratic liberals accepted the limitations of capitalism and the slice of the pie available to workers. (In fact, through their inaction they allowed that slice to shrink.) Hence any gain in jobs for Blacks seemed to come at the expense of jobs for whites.

Today, competition among groups is even more intense. Whatever the stated intentions, the reality is that "diversity," "pluralism," "multi-culturalism," the "gorgeous mosaic," "rainbow coalitions" and other top-down "alliances" act as a cover for stirring up the war of all against all among the masses. This, Thomas Hobbes's cynical view of human nature, is in fact a realistic assessment of life under capitalism in the absence of class consciousness.

Clinton's economic program, with its limited stimulus for new jobs and its high-tech emphasis, can only tilt the job market more strongly in favor of those who already have the better educational opportunities. The trifling sums offered for program like Head Start, which have demonstrated little long-term impact in any case, are at best cosmetic. That, plus the new tax burden being placed on working-class people can only lead to greater animosity and fratricide within the class.

The capitalists do not want race war *today*: it disrupts profit-making. However, as the crisis of the system inexorably deepens, they will find race war preferable to the alternative, working-class revolution. Thus the worst enemy Black (and white) workers have is leaders who counsel "realism" — electoralism — and who accept the fake "pluralist" coalitions. Any policy that says that capitalism must be accepted means that racism and fratricide must be accepted with it.

FROM MASS ACTION TO CLASS ACTION

Capitalist conditions guarantee that the masses will erupt again. In that sense Los Angeles is the harbinger of the future. But there is now a general reluctance among urban workers and unemployed to engage in riots. The enormous size of the L.A. riot this year resulted from an outrageous provocation, but supporting eruptions around the country were relatively small. Not because the anger wasn't great, but because worsening social conditions have taken their toll. The inner cities are awash in cynicism and hopelessness.

The rage is potentially volcanic, but another lesson has been learned: the system won't deliver the way it once promised to. As the economy drags downward, the outlook for getting anywhere by any means at all seems bleaker. The masses correctly sense that whatever gains were made in the past, an avalanche of similar upheavals today would face a huge military crackdown, very likely backed up by demagogically aroused public opinion.

Given the enormous frustration felt by the working class as a whole, the danger of fratricidal anti-Black racism is very real. Under such circumstances, riots can be made to seem part of the problem, not of the solution. But that means the riots must be transcended, not repudiated. Mass action remains the only way that workers in general and Blacks in particular have ever won anything or ever will.

In Los Angeles today, workers are steaming not just about police brutality but over economic attacks as well. Latino drywallers recently formed their own union and flying squads to battle the bosses. Teachers were forced to swallow wage cuts and deeper school deterioration. The simmering rage extends well beyond Black workers in the working class.

Mass action must become class action if it is to succeed: united struggle against the ruling class's attacks. A general strike is key. The working class, if united, is a mighty force which can stop industries, transport and even the government in their tracks. Police and armies can be made impotent by an organized, determined and armed general strike.

No working-class fighter can ignore the profound suspicions Blacks have toward whites, including white workers, given the history of racism in the U.S. In Los Angeles and New York, social explosions revealed anti-white, anti-Jewish, anti-Latino and anti-Asian feelings among Black people. These sentiments are dangerous because they misdirect the struggle. When lumpen street-gang leaders began to have their way during the L.A. riots in fostering fratricidal acts, they played into the hands of white racist demagogues.

The real threat of racist fratricide comes when whites, accepting the "inevitability" of capitalism, get suckered into thinking they can defend their interests by attacking Blacks rather than the exploiters of all. In reality, the jobs and wages of white workers too are undercut when they accept the bosses' "right" to pay starvation wages to Blacks.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' PARTY

Many workers respond enthusiastically to the idea of a general strike, but they invariably add that the labor bureaucrats won't buy it and will try to derail it. They are right. Only revolutionaries see that there is a way out. That's why they are the consistent fighters for the mass strike. As the crisis deepens, the rest of the class will see it too. And in time — if all genuine communists join us in building the alternative revolutionary party leadership.

Disheartened workers see no alternative because they accept the diminishing pie; they swallow the bureaucrats' line that capitalism is the only system that works. (Even the union reformers, the so-called rank-and-filers, never publicly challenge the system.) Communists consistently fight for workers' action, class independence and the general strike because they see that the way to fight off the bosses' attacks is to reject the bosses' system with its constant demands for profits above everything else.

Revolutionaries also believe that Blacks need their own mass organizations to defend their interests, alongside the mass interracial working-class formations. In these organizations revolutionaries will campaign for leadership, urging among other things the establishment of armed self-defense units to deter racist attacks. These will also serve as models for interracial workers' militias and armed picket lines.

Black and Latino workers, by virtue of the lessons of their struggles as well as their position in society, will be in the leadership of the coming revolutionary party far out of proportion to their share of the population. Reality proves every day that people of color will never achieve lasting gains in this society. It is in the vital self-interest of the oppressed to fight for jobs and living wages for all; but capitalism excludes this. It is in Black and Latino workers' self-interest to help lead all workers to see that there is an alternative to fratricidally fighting each other over crumbs — anti-racist solidarity against the bosses. For them to be in the forefront of building the workers' revolutionary party is not an abstract moral duty but a practical necessity. ●

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Spring 1993

Spike Lee vs. Malcolm X

by Dave Franklin

Spike Lee's film *Malcolm X* adds a commercial exclamation point to the rapid growth of interest, particularly among Black youth, in one of the greatest fighters for Black liberation. As popular entertainment it is a measured success. As an indictment of racism it is powerful. But as an intended tribute to one of the most heroic and tragic figures in American history, it is a failure. And as a guide for Black people in their struggle against racist bestiality, it is nothing less than a disaster.

In terms of its length, scope, commercial resources — and most unfortunately, its content — *Malcolm X* can be accurately described as a Hollywood spectacle. As such, it hangs together reasonably well, maintaining keen interest for the most part, but with the typical lapses and doses of overly drawn-out scenes. Its success is achieved largely through some stunning acting performances, above all that of Denzel Washington in the incredibly challenging lead role.

But for all the cinematic talent, the real Malcolm X is never allowed to appear. As Marxists we are the last ones to demand dogmatically that art conform to a political line. But knowing who Malcolm was, it is impossible to portray his life without an authentic conception of what he stood for politically and socially.

Malcolm played a crucial, challenging role in the unfolding Black upheavals of his times. With good reason, more and more Blacks looked to him for leadership as the struggle deepened. Martin Luther King Jr. was weighed down in futile efforts to tap the conscience of the powers-that-be in capitalist America. The struggle was also exposing the social impotence of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam (NOI), whose separatism at first appeared to be an alternative.

Malcolm's evolving thought and conduct not only reflected the gains of the ongoing struggle but also seemed to be blazing a new path. His profound wrestling with the limitations and contradictions of the anti-racist movement toward the end of his life resonated throughout the community. But Spike Lee, because he attempts to reconstruct Malcolm X as a particular kind of role model for Blacks today, has in fact created a caricature of the mass struggles of the past.

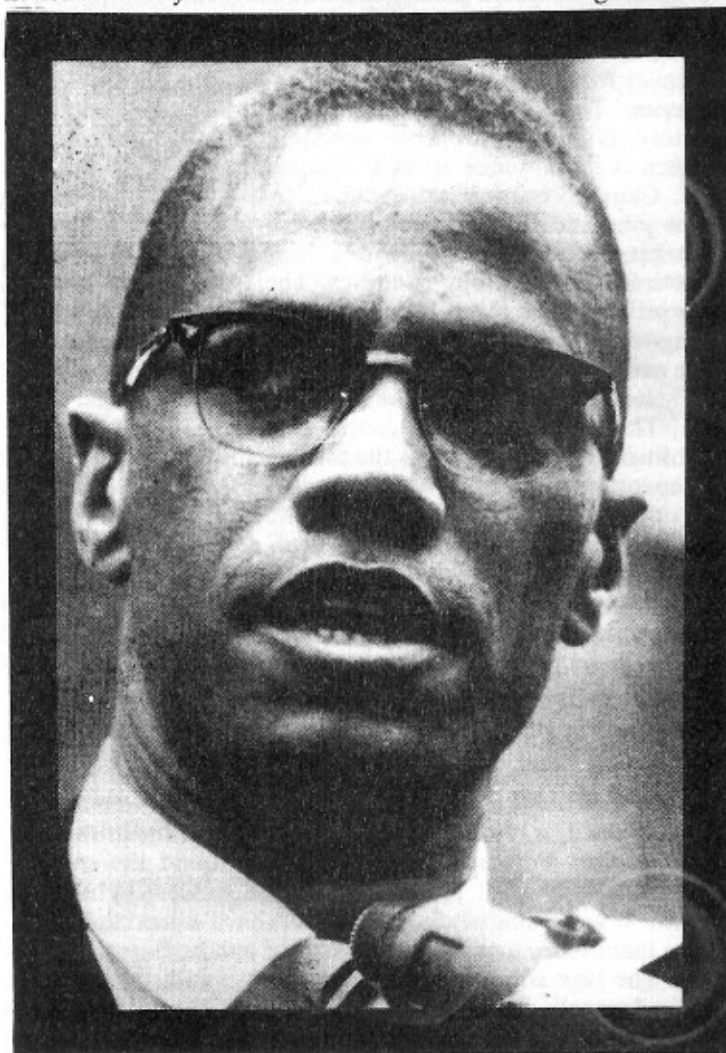
A BLACK HORATIO ALGER

It was no accident that in February of this year, Lee showed up at New York's Rikers Island prison, film in hand and a jacket with a big X done up in stars and stripes on his back. Lee's message was simple: Malcolm was once a prisoner too; he too was once a victim of poverty and racism; by dint of his personal character, he persevered and rose to become a Great Man. You can too.

Malcolm X imparts the view that the lessons of its hero's life can be applied to living within this society, not to overcoming it. Self-reliance, picking oneself up by one's bootstraps, morality — these are the conclusions to be drawn, and no hint of an alternative is provided. It is no wonder that

even open conservatives like the *Wall Street Journal* and Clarence Thomas (can you imagine what Malcolm would have said of him!) liked the movie.

The film is a Horatio Alger tale with a Black twist. Alger's stories were propaganda yarns designed to sell the nations' white youth on the American Dream. He gloried in



social mobility: luck, pluck and hard work would pave the way for the deserving poor to rise high in the world. Of course, the dream was a myth for the multitude of white youth. For Blacks today it is an absolute mirage.

Lee's movie dulls the cutting edge of Malcolm X's life and message. There is no question that Black youth identify with Malcolm's rage against, and alienation from, the dominant racist society. But it is interesting that Black youth have not flocked to the film in the numbers expected.

One likely reason for this is that many see the film as yet

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