



Re-Crete  
the Fourth International

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## Racist Right Turn Attacks All Workers

The U.S. ruling class is going for the jugular in its war on the working class. The Congressional Republicans' "Contract With America," President Clinton's State of the Union address, Proposition 187 in California, the Federal Reserve Board's repeated hikes in interest rates to maintain mass unemployment and lower wages, and the budget-slashing plans of governors, legislators and mayors from West Coast to East — all show bourgeois politicians moving to dismantle the public services and social gains won by working-class, labor and Black struggles from the 1930's and 1960's on.

The right-wing onslaught is powered by a barely hidden racist appeal. Politicians of both parties denounce welfare and street crime (racist code words for Black people) as the source of all problems. Immigrants, legal and "illegal" — again, mainly non-white — are also under the gun. This is the bourgeoisie's tactic to hide the fact that they are attacking the entire working class. But the crisis is not the fault of people of color or other working-class people: it is the inevitable product of the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression. Each day the ruling class's divide-and-conquer strategy becomes more blatant.

Welfare mothers, stereotyped as predominantly young and Black, are blamed for draining the economy by not working. Meanwhile the corporations and government slash jobs, child care, education and everything that makes it possible to escape the misery of life on a welfare check. At the same time, the politicians step up tax cuts and direct handouts for the capitalists, some \$250 billion in Clinton's budget.

Proposition 187, whose anti-immigrant momentum is extending across the country, declares that the people of California are suffering economic hardships caused by the presence of illegal aliens. This turns reality on its head. It is precisely the misery inflicted upon Mexico and other Latin nations by Wall Street imperialism that forces millions of hungry workers and peasants to flee their native countries each year. In their constant search for profits, the capitalists super-exploit immigrants — at starvation wages and in the most unsafe conditions. And then the capitalist bloodsuckers tell American workers that their problem is competition from

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New York: Rally against budget cuts. Misleaders say register to vote next time, but workers want to fight now. Revolutionaries say: 'General Strike Can Stop Budget Cuts!'

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# COFI and LRP Report

This issue appears months late because of our preparations for the COFI conference in January (see page 3). Consequently it is somewhat longer than usual. An interim bulletin reporting on our activities was sent to subscribers; copies of this report and other recent leaflets are available on request. As well, an article on our work in the transit union in New York City appears on page 27. A report on our interventions in the Haitian liberation struggle is on page 40.

Internationally, our activity continues to focus on South Africa. We are planning a second trip to meet and discuss with groups of workers engaged in fighting the new capitalist ANC regime. (See page 36.) We have also held public meetings in New York on both the Haitian and South African events in the recent period.

If you are not currently on our invitation list, please write and let us know your areas of interest and what days and times you are available to attend discussions. We also urge readers to order our recently issued pamphlets on the Haitian and South African revolutionary perspectives if you haven't already done so. (See the ad on p. 10.)

## AUSTRALIA

COFI/LRP in Australia has focused on establishing COFI as the only authentic communist presence in the workers' movement. According to our reporter, the general labor scene is defensive and quiet, although punctuated with both threats and actual mobilizations by workers.

In late November and early December, transport workers threatened nationwide industrial action for a 15 percent wage increase. Sections of the top big business capitulated and gave the increase. Even social democratic Prime Minister Keating came out in support of the wage claim — but quickly

retracted his support after being told to do so by the bourgeoisie. However, this apparent victory was moderated by the control that the labor bureaucrats had over the dispute. They were able to quickly resolve it, thereby thwarting any fight which could have led to nationwide action by workers.

After 12 years of austerity, a critical and oppositional working class exists, as partially demonstrated by an occasional pocket of industrial action breaking out of the straight-jacket of the bureaucrats. However, the Labor Party still retains its grip over the workers, in spite of the disgust of workers with Keating's austerity policies.

Although recent electoral support for the federal Labor Party still reflected working-class opposition against the proposed savage attacks of a conservative Liberal government, the bulk of the left used the elections to give virtually uncritical support to the reformist ALP and build illusions in reformism once again. COFI called for a "No" vote for Labor, taking into account both the austerity program of the ALP and the fact that the vast majority of workers were showing disillusionment with the ALP.

## NEW YORK LRP

As we go to press, struggles against draconian budget cuts are beginning to emerge. We have been intervening in both small and mass meetings, demonstrations and left forums. Our revolutionary analysis is presented in the lead article in this issue. Specifically, since the public higher education budget is being slashed to the bone, we have already had good opportunities to intervene at City College in Harlem, where we have a small but active LRP caucus.

Quite a few students have shown they are tired of being told to rely on lobbying and bourgeois electoralist solutions; they have welcomed our speeches and interventions in favor of mass action, centered around the need for class unity and a general strike. A mass demonstration against City Hall and Wall Street linked to a student strike is scheduled for late March. We are planning an LRP forum at City College to present the revolutionary solution to the bourgeois attack.

We have also been continuing our work among hospital workers, who have protested in huge numbers against the cuts. Unlike groups like the International Socialist Organization and the Workers World Party, we say up front that the key question today is building a revolutionary party and revolution itself, not just "activism" and militancy.

In our interventions against the health care cuts, we do not hesitate to expose the passivity and sellouts of hospital union officials. In contrast, ISO and WWP glorify bureaucrats like Dennis Rivera, the president of 1199 (the union of

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## Proletarian Revolution

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# COFI Sets International Tasks

by Evelyn Kaye

The world is about to enter a revolutionary period of mass upheavals and convulsions. Although there have been outbreaks and confrontations in many areas of the world, the decisive explosions have yet to come. Capitalist society will increasingly polarize between forces of revolution and open counterrevolution (fascism, military dictatorship, etc.) ... The present conjuncture is one of relative calm before the coming storm.

So begins the *Tasks for the Period* document adopted at the conference of the Communist Organization for the Fourth International (COFI) in January. The conference and the documents it produced codified our fundamental views and detailed our perspectives for the coming period. The conference was a major step forward in arming COFI for the necessary political turn in light of its coming tasks.

In this article we summarize the political work of the conference. We also review the internal debates which accompanied our political gains, together with their organizational consequences. One major document, the *Political Resolution*, is reprinted in this issue. We are preparing others for publication as articles or pamphlets.

## REVOLUTIONARY OPTIMISM ...

The LRP-U.S. and COFI have stood virtually alone in holding to the Marxist understanding that the revolutionary party and revolution itself can only be a result of working-class consciousness and action. For us, unlike the middle class centrists, the fall of Stalinism was a significant opening for a new revolutionary period, a portent of the fact that the working class is going to smash the system as a whole.

In 1938 Leon Trotsky expected an imminent period of revolutions. We are rapidly moving into such a period once again. Our optimistic view of the new revolutionary period is based on understanding that the forces responsible for the defeats in previous periods have been weakened tremendously. The objective factors favor revolution and will be far more decisive than the present lag in social consciousness.

Success in the coming revolutions chiefly depends upon the ability of our class to cast aside its current cynical misleadership in time and re-create its own authentic vanguard party. Communist consciousness is the proletariat's awareness that its class mission is the destruction of capitalism. It is by no means an automatic or spontaneous achievement; conscious development and intervention of the revolutionary party is necessary at every stage of struggle.

The proletarian vanguard party is the material expression of this advanced class consciousness. With rising class struggle on the horizon, COFI, the organization of advanced communist workers, fights to illuminate lessons of struggle so as to raise the consciousness of growing numbers of our fellow workers about the primary task: the re-creation of the Fourth International. Only a genuine Fourth International can prepare the proletariat to carry out the world socialist revolution. The alternative is unimaginable barbarism.

## ... VS. MIDDLE-CLASS CYNICISM

A central danger that advocates of the revolutionary party face is the coming drive by left reformists and centrists to create new "democratic socialist" parties designed to capture vanguard workers. The bulk of the left assumes, know-

ingly or not, that the working class itself cannot achieve Marxist consciousness; that it is capable of building a revolutionary international and making the revolution. This cynical and demoralized view prevails because of the historical



Tens of thousands of workers marched in Brussels last October against bosses' European union.

defeats of our class and the growth of middle-class forces.

Instead, these leftists seek to use the proletariat as an unconscious tool. The fraudulent socialism of our times, Stalinist, social-democratic and "third-worldist," was nurtured by the vast expansion of the middle strata in the years after the Second World War. This gave rise to the even more vast expansion of illusions that the middle class was a decisive class in society, a class whose understanding of the world could prove superior to the might of the bourgeoisie and the supposedly limited and dim perceptions of the proletariat. The present-day reformist and centrist intelligentsia is in reality the left reflection of wider circles of intellectuals who have outrightly given up on the working class and become reactionary or "neo-conservative."

Although the middle strata, under the impact of deepening capitalist attacks, are rapidly disintegrating around the world, the false consciousness foisted upon large sectors of the working class will not disappear automatically; it must be openly fought as part of the struggle for advancing communist class consciousness. A new growth of left middle-class reformism and centrism must be prevented.

## FROM OLD PERIOD TO NEW

Our *International Perspectives* demonstrates that political periods in history are to be understood in terms of a dynamic interplay between objective and subjective factors. The 1968-

1989 period marked the end of the post-World War II prosperity bubble, the consequent resurgence of advanced working-class struggle — and the rebirth of an authentic communist tendency with the formation of the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), our predecessor (See *Socialist Voice* No. 1). This was a response to major working-class upheavals like the French general strike of 1968, the Black ghetto explosions in the U.S., and the mass upsurges against Stalinist rule in East Europe — as well as to the rebellions against imperialism in Vietnam and elsewhere.

In the last major perspectives document of the LRP a decade ago, we saw the revolutionary potential of that period but also the factors slowing the pace of class struggle. In fact, the Stalinist and reformist misleaderships proved able to hold the working class in tow, particularly since capitalism in the advanced countries could still gradually erode working-class gains rather than resort to head-on confrontations. As our *International Perspectives* puts it:

**The strength of both social democracy and Stalinism came from usurping the gains and class institutions achieved by the struggles of the revolutionary proletariat. It was only by using the power of the working class against itself that decadent capitalism has stayed alive.**

Today, the objective factor of intensified crisis means that head-on attacks are unavoidable. The fall of Stalinist statified capitalism reflected the opening up of a new period putting an end to both the remnants of postwar prosperity and the whole Cold War era. Further, given the sharp decline of the traditional Stalinist and reformist parties, the class struggle unleashed will be more volatile than in the past. Today's reformism provides a far more fragile line of defense for the system.

Our Marxist optimism is based on this perspective. Upcoming class struggles worldwide will be far less fettered by alien class leadership; the path for the growth of an authentic proletarian revolutionary international has been opened up. Because of the hesitancy of both the bourgeois offensive and the working-class response, the present conjuncture can only be characterized as an unstable interregnum. The coming period will witness the return of the proletariat to its revolutionary destiny.

### THE HESITANT BOURGEOIS OFFENSIVE

The imperialist bourgeoisie today seems almost everywhere on the offensive and the workers on the defensive. But Marxists must be on guard against impressionism that sees only the level of appearance and misses the fundamental motion underneath.

The present balance of class forces is highly unstable. The collapse of Stalinism served as a very short-term vindication of capitalism as the only viable social system. But in reality the collapse of Stalinism was a consequence of the already deepening crisis of the decaying world system. It simply gave way first at its weakest link, where its contradictions were the strongest.

In recent years the masses have experienced intensified suffering. In the West, unemployment has grown immensely. Many employed workers are working less time and for considerably lower wages than in the past. The social wage has also been sharply eroded, as pensions and state subsidies for schooling, health, housing and transport have been undercut. Cities have been allowed to decay; the human environment has been mercilessly contaminated.

The proletariat in the Stalinist countries suffered even

more because these economies were generally in far worse shape. And in the majority of "third world" countries, where little or highly skewed development had taken place, the masses have been plundered of what little they had. However, as our *International Perspectives* document points out:

**Capitalism measures success in the class war not by the increase in misery it brings about but by whether it thereby gains the necessary level of profits. By this holiest of standards, the assault has resulted in only modest success. Yet the bourgeoisie still hesitates. It knows that the proletariat has not ceased to threaten the system.**

In general, Western capitalism has humbled and disciplined the unions, which in turn have retreated rapidly, thereby inviting harder attacks. But, given the contradictory nature of unions, the advanced capitalist states have refrained from smashing them wholesale — for two interrelated reasons. One, they fear that if pushed to the wall, unionized workers will explosively fight back; two, the unions still have value as disciplining agencies within the working class, to keep the masses in line.

Prosperity and the Cold War not only bound together the Western bloc, it tied together the capitalists within the different nations more closely. The changed international situation has shattered this unity. Now in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the U.S., Japan and Europe, governments are weak, divided and even toppling. Some parties that have ruled for generations, as in Italy and Japan, have collapsed. Everywhere new governmental coalitions are attempted one day, only to fall of their own lack of social weight the next.

In fact, bourgeois politicians everywhere are rightly regarded as corrupt and bumbling. Around the world, with the exception of Mandela in South Africa, hardly a politician is thought of as having real stature.

None of the major Western parties has yet cohered a plan for what is to be done. In the U.S. there is a serious dispute over where and when to get involved in overseas military ventures. Europe, supposedly in the process of uniting, cannot agree on what to do in Bosnia. Above all the disputes rage on over how much and how fast to dismantle the "welfare state," whether private industry or the state should tackle the workers, and how rapidly should the buffering labor-aristocratic, middle-class and petty-bourgeois strata be undermined?

This bourgeois disunity and incoherence is one of the factors that opens favorable opportunities for revolutionary class struggle. However, the state of indecision is temporary. Crises and struggles will soon force the bourgeoisie in the direction of greater decisiveness in their attacks.

### PERMANENT REVOLUTION TODAY

Our perspective relies on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The postwar era appeared to challenge this theory. If, as permanent revolution argued, only the working class could achieve genuine socialist gains in this epoch, how could the petty-bourgeois Stalinists so thoroughly nationalize the means of production in East Europe, China, Cuba, etc.? If only the workers' struggle for socialism could resolve the remaining bourgeois-democratic tasks, how could bourgeois and middle-class nationalists lead in carrying out the colonial revolution and thereby win national self-determination?

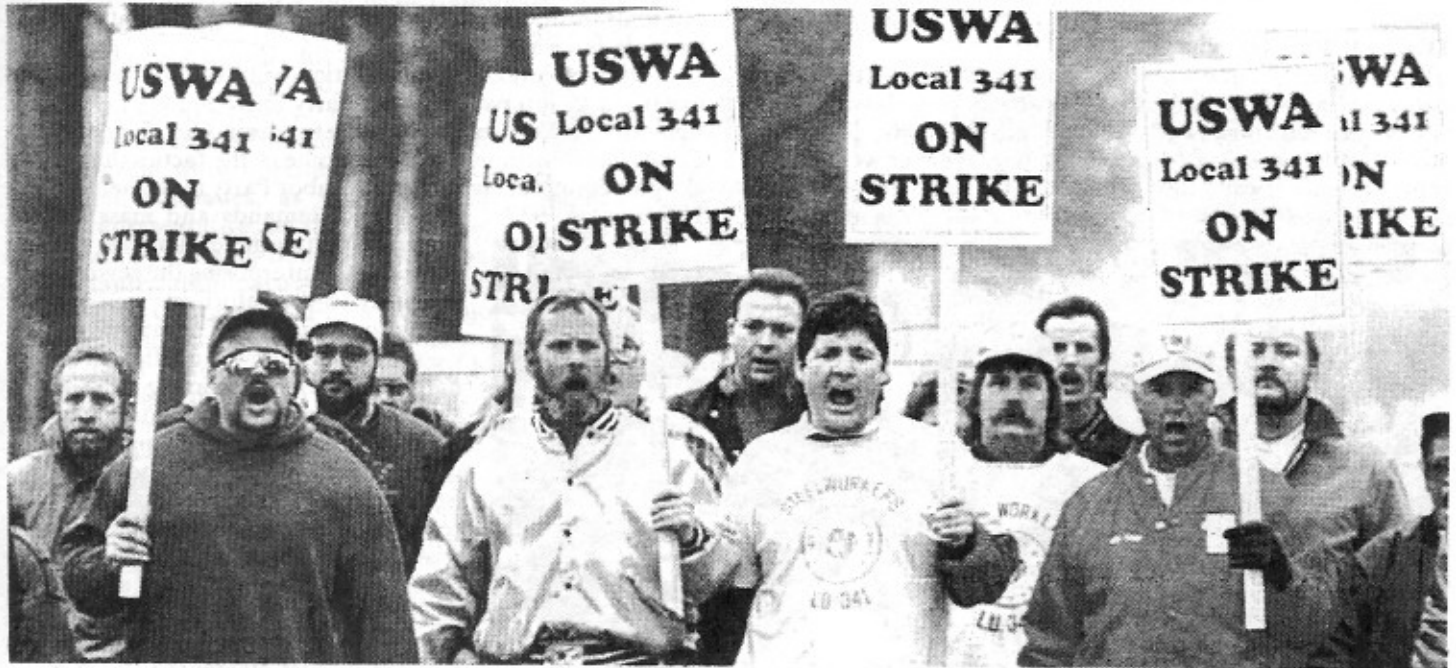
The LRP put forward a corollary to the theory of permanent revolution that confirmed and deepened the theory. In general, the bourgeoisie, and the pro-capitalist middle strata which operate for it politically, pulled back from the

bourgeois democratic revolution out of fear of the proletariat organized into a property-threatening class. That was Trotsky's point, and history has borne it out.

But Stalinism rested on the usurped legacy of the Bolshevik revolution. After the Second World War, it was strong enough to defeat and decapitate the working class in East Europe. In essence, the same process was repeated in China and with the other Stalinist states. In the absence of revolutionary proletarian leadership, nationalist middle

struggle in the world. This is the notion of combined and uneven development, which Trotsky used as a basis for his understanding of the coming Russian revolution. As our *International Perspectives* document states:

To the confusion of the mechanical Marxists, working-class revolution did not come first in the advanced and mature capitalist countries. It confounded pseudo-Marxist moralists likewise because it did not originate in the most oppressed and backward countries either. The old Russian



February: Steelworkers launch angry strike at Kaiser Aluminum's Ohio plant. Under the surface in the U.S., there is an explosion waiting to happen.

classes in the "third world" countries like Cuba (also relying on Stalinist parties as a disciplining agent) felt no insurmountable threat from the decapitated working class.

Only a strong Stalinist organization able to restrain and defeat the working class could contain the proletarian threat to property so that radical steps, otherwise impossible for bourgeois elements, could be taken. We concluded that when Stalinism declined the bourgeois fear of any threat to property would become dominant once again, and the revolutionary pretenses of the pro-capitalist pseudo-socialists would dissipate. Thus the defeat of Stalinism reconfirmed the original perspective of permanent revolution.

As well, permanent revolution was based on Lenin and Trotsky's perspective of the epochal decay of capitalism. Because we understood that the postwar prosperity boom was made possible only by the historical defeats of the working class, we could foresee the resurfacing of the economic crisis and predict the general line of world development as no other political tendency could even claim to do. We pointed out that the crisis would bring down the weak Stalinist regimes, undermine the labor aristocratic and middle-class bases of the Communist parties everywhere and destroy illusions in the ability of Stalinist and non-Stalinist "third worldists" to achieve genuine national independence.

#### UNEVEN AND COMBINED DEVELOPMENT

Another key aspect of permanent revolution is borne out in South Africa, with the most advanced working-class

empire was the epitome of uneven and combined development caught between property forms and relations cast in pre-capitalist Czarism and the already decadent modern world of capitalism.

The document identifies Russia, China and a number of "Newly Industrialized Countries" (NIC's) as revolutionary powderkegs, analogous to the Russian empire before 1917. Today the combined and uneven countries have strong and volatile industrial working classes, rich in combative experience against both exploitation and special oppression. The major fault lines around the world are erupting again where the struggles against exploitation and oppression intersect most intensively.

The *International Perspectives* reasserts as a central factor that proletarian revolutionaries must emphasize the struggle for the bourgeois democratic demands. It also reaffirms that revolutionary success in the "combined and uneven" nations depends on sparking revolution in the advanced countries. But today this only means that permanent revolution is more and more central to revolution *within* the advanced nations themselves. For historical reasons and because of the intensification of attacks in this period, oppressed sectors of the proletariat in the advanced countries, immigrant as well as indigenous, form a strategic layer of the vanguard.

Although Trotsky originally derived permanent revolution as a strategy for Russia, by the time of the Spanish revolution of the mid-1930's he recognized that it had to become a world strategy. Specifically, he noted that perma-

nent revolution was critical for U.S. Blacks.

Today we can say that American Blacks are not only the key to the U.S. revolution, but their struggles set up a model for international struggles far beyond what Trotsky saw. The U.S. Black struggle has had a major impact around the world. Two years ago the Los Angeles riots won the support of an important layer of young white workers in this country, at the same time that oppressed and young workers all around the world identified with it.

### THE COURSE OF REFORMISM

Antagonism between the labor aristocracy and the more oppressed and exploited layers of the working class characterized the reformist heyday of capitalism. Today, given the erosion of income and jobs of the upper layers as well as the super-exploited, capitalists attempt to deepen the dividing line of the past based on material gains — by accenting dif-



*Big Mac Attack: Mexican protestors deface McDonald's as symbol of U.S. imperialism.*

ferences of color and nationality. The system has no choice but to attempt to distribute the few crumbs it has left to much smaller groups — and to remove gains it was once forced to cede. The middle strata and the labor aristocrats will increasingly be encouraged to credit their gains to the favored status of their race or nation.

Social democratic reformists are hardly the chief proponents of openly extending U.S.-style racism to their own countries. Still, as populist nationalists, they have willingly joined in such chauvinist work. Labor politicians and trade union bureaucrats are often found in the forefront of fights to restrict emigration in order to protect the jobs of "their" workers. Socialist as well as Communist Party reformists in France, for example, spearheaded attacks on foreign workers and the rights of immigrants.

When the present conjuncture turns fully into a period of proletarian upheaval, some reformists will inevitably break off to the left and attempt to erect a left reformist party of one type or another. The bourgeoisie will need to turn away from its trendy privatization campaigns and return to massive state intervention and even nationalization. The ties between

the labor bureaucracy and the states will bolster the left reformist trend.

In any case, whatever illusions they still cling to, the desperate middle strata and labor aristocracy will not be able to reconstruct their heyday of reformist prosperity. A new reformist party will certainly attempt to resuscitate class-collaborationist popular fronts. Reformism may have an Indian Summer renewal, but it cannot succeed for any significant period. If there is not a resolute proletarian communist alternative, the trajectory of the desperate elements will be towards fascism.

The revolutionary organization will have to prepare the vanguard to intervene in new party movements in order to fight any new consolidation of reformism. Our *Tasks for the Conjuncture* document outlined some of the tactics that Trotsky pioneered in relation to the Labor Party movement in the U.S. in the 1930's: transitional demands and mass action slogans like the general strike will be central in counterposing the revolutionary party to the reformists.

In our analysis of centrism today, we summarized how the different international groupings claiming to be Trotskyist are already capitulating to reformism — even before the pressures of mass movements have pushed reformists to the left. We recognize that left reformism will lean heavily on the centrists to provide it with cadres and a new rhetorical cover. We will accelerate our polemics with the international left in order to expose its link to reformism and win its best elements to fight it.

As Lenin taught, the revolutionary vanguard will not be built by the labor aristocrats. Dispossessed, some will indeed come to our side. But above all we must do as the Bolsheviks did: go deeper into the working class so as to base our party upon its more exploited and oppressed sections.

In the world today, oppression is above all a tool used by the capitalists to facilitate super-exploitation of layers of the working class, in order to maintain the exploitation of us all. For Marxists, oppression is not viewed simply as a moral category. Would-be saviors on the left laud oppressed people in general for their quality as victims, ignoring their specific importance as fighters against capitalism. Other leftists, more directly reflecting aristocratic prejudices, salute the working class in general but dismiss the need for revolutionaries to root themselves in the oppressed layers.

Working-class interracialism and internationalism cannot be developed under the pretense that racism and chauvinism do not exist within the class. Nor can they be based on the claim that special struggles against racism and other forms of oppression should not be fought for now because they are only achievable under socialism, or because they allegedly create disunity. Such positions are reactionary.

### COFI DEBATES LEAD TO SPLITS

Two forms of opposition to these perspectives surfaced within COFI. The first came during the pre-conference period: Geoff Boucher, the leader of the LRP/Australia,

resigned, leaving political life and claiming tremendous personal demoralization. Not coincidentally, he stated his attraction to the centrist politics of LRCI. (See our article on Workers Power in this issue.)

As we now understand, Boucher had become demoralized by the ebb of the class struggle in Australia. At the Australian LRP conference last June, he had proposed a line of permanent electoral support to reformist labor parties. As well, he had raised ideas about using transitional demands in effect as a substitute for the revolutionary program. At that time he did not identify his positions with LRCI, which he described as holding a "totally revisionist theory."

These tentative positions of capitulation to reformism were opposed by the other Australian comrades, as well as by the COFI representative, at the June conference. And by the end, Boucher said he had no substantive differences with the positions of the LRP/U.S. and COFI on any major questions. But he resurrected his differences in the brief documents accompanying his surprise resignation three months later.

Boucher had led a small but promising section in a country at the forefront of the class struggle in the past few years (see PR 43). His sudden desertion without a political fight was treated with contempt within the ranks of COFI. It contrasted sharply with his earlier role: after leading interventions in the general strike movement in Victoria in 1992, he took the lessons of the class struggle back to the party and led an inspiring political fight against the degenerating politics of the section's leader, Paul White.

White was then attempting to revise the central conception of the Leninist task of party-building in the direction of spontaneism — in which, for example, agitation for a general strike became a substitute for propaganda for the vanguard party. (See PR 46 and *Workers Revolution* 21 for analysis of this dispute.) Boucher's past theoretical contributions remain gains for COFI, which will be preserved and extended. Still, our work in Australia has suffered a serious blow. In particular, it means suspending publication of the Australian magazine, *Workers Revolution*, given our reduced resources.

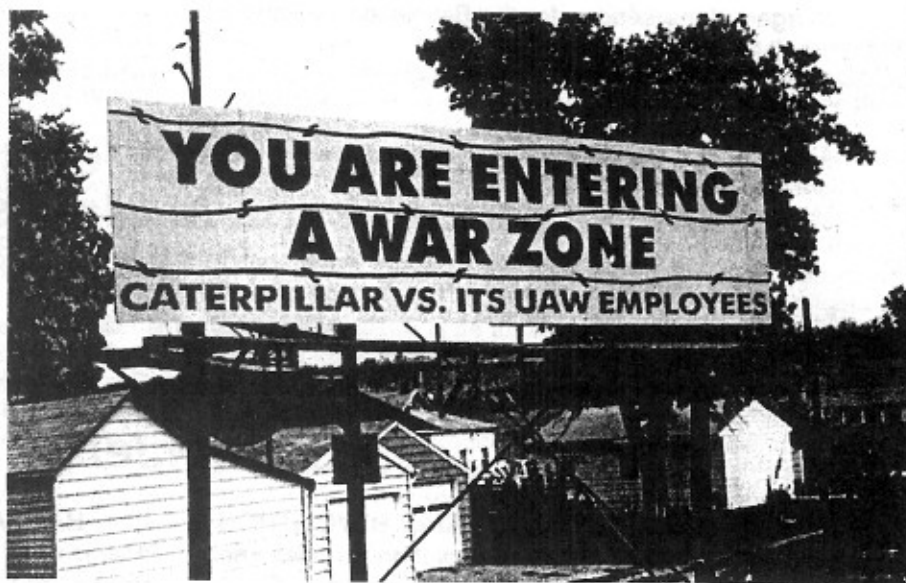
Boucher's hasty retreat deprived COFI of a fuller examination of the ideas he was developing. Nevertheless, he included arguments in his resignation documents that clarify the cynical line he succumbed to. First, he rejects orienting to a vanguard of revolutionary-minded workers at this conjuncture, arguing that this was counterposed to work among a broad layer of militants. Second, he scoffs at the centrality of the need to recruit more oppressed workers into our ranks. He argued that since program is decisive for a small revolutionary group (which is true), why bother deepening our class composition at this stage?

This mistake — not seeing that program is a reflection of class forces — was revealed to be anti-materialist idealism when Boucher repeated it on a much larger scale. He rejected our understanding of why the Fourth International ended as a revolutionary organization with its betrayal of the Bolivian revolution in 1952-3. As opposed to centrists who see the International degenerating simply from an overdose of bad ideas, we say that the changed class composition of the

International and its surrounding milieu after the massive working-class defeats of World War II eventually destroyed its program as well. A middle-class tendency in both composition and program was the ultimate result. (See the Introduction to our pamphlet on the Bolivian revolution.)

#### THE AUSTRALIAN EXPULSION

Boucher's resignation also illuminated a matter which had been in internal debate within COFI for over a year. As a result of the factional dispute with White in 1993, Boucher



*Workers in central Illinois know there is a class war in the U.S.*

had led the group in expelling White's minority faction — based on charges of theft of money from COFI and ideological capitulations. Because COFI is not a democratic centralist organization but is limited at this stage to fraternal relations, the expulsion was conducted in the Australian group alone. However, this did not prevent the COFI Center from arguing vigorously against the expulsion.

While there was no dispute over the validity of the monetary or political charges, the COFI center held that the expulsion was a violation of democratic centralist principles within the Australian section. We argued that the White faction should have been allowed to stay in, with minority rights, as long as it accepted the discipline of the party. Given the rapid degeneration of White and his faction, we expected his disloyalty to be proved in practice soon enough.

We decided to work patiently with the young comrades of the Australian section to convince them of our view of democratic centralism. But the documents promised by Boucher to explain his point of view never arrived. The Australian representative at the COFI conference has now been convinced that the expulsion was a violation of principle.

Our conference document argued that democratic centralism is not a set of rules and regulations but the logical reflection of the struggle for proletarian politics against the intrusions of labor aristocratic and other petty-bourgeois ideologies into the working class. The document outlines the development of the Bolshevik faction in the Russian Social-Democratic party and summarizes Lenin's conclusions:

**To develop revolutionary consciousness, a vanguard party**

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was necessary, not a broad labor party. The strike struggles demonstrated both the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat but also its weaknesses under capitalism — even political consciousness and divisions along national, racial, sexual and other lines. Localized isolated struggles by small circles served to dissipate the revolutionary energy of the masses. Unified systematic tactics were necessary. A centralized, revolutionary organization was critical to the further development of the struggle.

The need for centralism had to be balanced by a flourishing internal democracy. In this light, we noted that our understanding of the class basis of faction fights and how to conduct them is part of our Trotskyist heritage. We reviewed the lessons of the factional struggle against the Shachtman tendency in the American SWP at the start of World War II, and concluded;

Trotsky's approach combined a hard line on political and theoretical questions with tactical flexibility on organizational questions. Trotsky was not against a split at all costs. Rather, he sought to insure that should there be a split it would be based on a clear programmatic break with the politics of the Fourth International. Indeed, it was the failure of Shachtman/Burnham/Abern to raise a counterposed programmatic alternative as the basis for a split which made their actions especially criminal. . . .

Because factional struggles are unavoidable expressions of the class struggle, the party needs a leadership that has the political hardness and organizational flexibility to maximize the gains of the revolutionary organization in these struggles. Minority rights must be protected for those oppositions which conduct themselves loyally. It is important that minorities know that the majority will use methods of political persuasion and not coercion. Otherwise the party will create an atmosphere that leads to burying differences — only to have them explode later.

Thus it is necessary not only to determine that there are conflicting class positions reflected in an internal dispute, but also to prove that claim in practice (and show that a group is unsalvageable for the party) before using expulsion.

#### OPPORTUNISM OF THE FRP

The second opposition to COFI politics emerged from our Swedish section, the FRP. Differences with the FRP — on how to combat social democracy and centrism, on democratic centralist functioning and other questions — had been under debate well before the conference.

The FRP had submitted a bulky document on "class analysis" which argued that COFI should redefine the working class as consisting only of those workers directly involved in production. They insisted, for example, that transport workers and service workers of all types were not part of the proletariat, and claimed to base this notion on Marx! The FRP's artificial definition reduced the proletariat to a small minority class in capitalist society — making the labor aristocracy a substantial fraction. The bulk of racially oppressed, immigrant, women and young workers ended up outside of the proletariat and its vanguard!

Behind this nonsensical definition, the FRP was adapting politically to layers of the Swedish working class loyal to social democracy, rather than addressing themselves to more revolutionary minded workers who had moved beyond social democracy or were alienated from it. We had challenged this direction repeatedly; we criticized their press for persistently putting the FRP forward as the left wing of Social

Democracy. A key symbol of this orientation was the FRP's refusal to use the slogan "Re-create the Fourth International" and the hammer, sickle and "4" emblem on the banner of their Swedish-language paper, on the grounds that this would alienate Swedish social democratic workers.

In the interest of the utmost political clarification, the COFI leadership had encouraged the FRP to fight for its political views in counterposition to our documents. We pointed out that failure to agree on fundamentals would mean that there was no basis for a common fraternal organization. Nevertheless, despite the clear evidence in the FRP's many documents, amendments, presentations and other interventions before and during the four-day conference, they denied having any fundamental differences. We were unable to shake them out of either their opportunist politics or their un-Bolshevik method of political conduct.

The conference itself made the FRP's direction even clearer. They rejected our analysis of the labor aristocracy as the major alien political intrusion into the working class, the main base for reformism. Instead, they said, the chief danger facing COFI was too great an orientation to the oppressed.

For example, the FRP did not accept our criticism of their past practice in an important movement of the Swedish working class. Before it joined COFI, the leadership of the FRP had participated in the Workers List, a left split from the Swedish social democratic party, the SAP. They politically supported a wing headed by a local union leader, Åke Wiklund, which stood for militant but reformist political action. Their activity focused on trying to push Wiklund to the left, in contrast to the revolutionary method — counterposing the revolutionary party and program in order to win the base of radicalizing workers from Wiklund's misleadership. We would have placed demands on Wiklund and possibly have used the critical support tactic — in order to split the top from the base, not primarily to win Wiklund and the other union leaders. (To this day the FRP has not supplied enough information for us to tell whether critical support would have been correct.)

In the international discussion, the FRP proposed changing our long-standing position for Palestinian self-determination and for a Palestinian workers' state — in favor of a bi-national workers' state. It has always been our position that a Palestinian workers' revolution would have every interest in winning over Jewish workers in Israel, an imperialist outpost in the Middle East. (See for example *SV* 6.) But a bi-national state means guaranteeing a political veto to the oppressor nationality over the oppressed, in effect denying the Palestinians the right to self-determination. (The FRP amendment also denied that Israel is a colonial-settler state.)

The right to self-determination for an oppressed people on the front lines against imperialism is a class question. The FRP position on Palestine, unanticipated though it was, was no anomaly. Their motivation for the amendment proved that their equation of Israeli and Palestinian workers was based on principle rather than tactics. This fit in with their overall adaptation to the labor aristocracy at the expense of oppressed workers.

#### THE SJD AFFAIR

The FRP's maneuverism in downplaying major political differences was not unprecedented. In 1993, they notified COFI that they had entered into a preliminary agreement to write joint documents and produce a joint publication with

another Swedish tendency, the former Joseph Dietzgen Study Association (SJD). The ex-SJD had recently broken with the pseudo-Trotskyist international organization founded by Nahuel Moreno and had had previous ties with FRP members. (See PR 29 for background on Moreno.)

The agreement aimed to facilitate the merger of the ex-SJD with the FRP and COFI. The COFI center criticized the deal for blurring the political issues separating us from the SJD. The SJD opposed our fundamental premises that the working class is the source of revolutionary consciousness, and that the revolutionary party is a creation of the working class itself. It upheld the pseudo-Trotskyist notion that sections of the petty bourgeoisie could substitute itself for the proletariat and create "deformed workers' states."

The joint documents were written to show surface agreement without mentioning underlying differences; that is a pragmatist way to downgrade theory. A common press and organizational forms would have been a barrier to the revolutionary party rather than an aid to its growth: they would have cut short the struggle to win SJD members to COFI's politics and suppressed the necessary debate over our differences in front of revolutionary minded workers. Therefore the center instead proposed further political discussion between the ex-SJD and the FRP and COFI as a whole.

The FRP accepted this proposal and pursued the discussions in that light. The ex-SJD then undertook a series of organizational maneuvers trying to force unification by ultimatums and manipulations, aiming to replace the FRP as COFI's Swedish section — further proof that it had not broken decisively with Morenoism.

The attempted unification collapsed, but the FRP never issued a balance sheet on its experience with the ex-SJD nor mentioned it in its press. For Leninists, the press organizes the party and "says what is" to the advanced workers. Isn't it important that they not be fooled by the revolutionary posturing of the ex-SJD? Shouldn't they gain the benefit of lessons learned by the FRP? The absence of a report shows that the FRP press is not aimed at advanced workers interested in revolutionary politics; rather it attempts to leap over them to reach mainstream militants who would be turned off by "sectarian" activities — the actual activities of the FRP.

### CORRECTING COFI'S ERRORS

By the end of the conference, the LRP-U.S. and our fraternal tendency in Australia had decided that it was necessary to dissolve our organizational ties with the FRP. Those ties had been fraternal, aiming towards democratic centralism based on reaching fundamental agreement. Once that goal evaporated, the organizational connection was untenable. This does not preclude further political discussion, collaboration where real agreement exists and even unity in the future if comrades can be won to COFI politics.

In making the decision to split, we noted a precedent from the struggle to build the Left Opposition in the 1930's. In 1932 Trotsky saw the need to sever ties with the Bordigist *Prometeo* group of Italy. He wrote:

The experience of many years has proved that the differences between the *Prometeo* group and the International Left Opposition are completely irreconcilable. . . . To take upon ourselves so much as a shadow of responsibility for the tactical views of the Bordigists would mean for the International Opposition . . . to hang a stone around its neck. Unity by no means signifies absolute salvation. Under certain circumstances an open and honest split, i.e.,

one carried through on a principled basis, proves to be necessary not only to free the hands of both sides, but also to prepare the possibility for real, and not fictitious, unification in the future. ("On the State of the Left Opposition," *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1932-33.*)

The differences between COFI and the FRP that culminated in the post-conference decision to break our formal ties had been mounting during our three years of organizational coexistence. A balance sheet of COFI, produced for the conference, noted that we had made an opportunist error in establishing our fraternal ties with the FRP in 1992 without sufficient serious testing.

The FRP had originated within the Marxist-Leninist Party in Sweden, an ex-Maoist, ex-Hoxhaist tendency with a melange of left-Morenoite and Cliffite politics (see PR 41.) It was then a new group that had not yet issued its own press — a crucial test of any propaganda organization. While the FRP professed general agreement with our international tendency, this agreement was proved neither by joint work or by common documents along the lines that were only now produced for this COFI conference.

The problems with the FRP showed us that the political basis for COFI had not been established solidly when it was formed in 1992. The documents of this conference are a far firmer foundation. As well, our *Balance Sheet* noted that by the time COFI was formed, the LRP-U.S. had already learned the importance of Trotsky's insistence in the late 1920's on using selected analyses of crucial world events as tests for political agreement and common organization. Such tests are a partial substitute for joint practical work, which is difficult for small groups in separate countries.

The conference represented a political victory for the building of an authentic revolutionary international. Our gains far outweighed the losses. We have corrected our past errors in the formation of COFI and learned important lessons from our limited debate with internal oppositions. Through the elaboration of a full-scale international perspectives as well as documents outlining tasks for the conjuncture and period, we have deepened our understanding of how to build COFI politically and organizationally.

Most crucially, our confidence and enthusiasm come from the test of COFI's politics in the class struggle itself. Our analysis and predictions on the Cold War and the collapse of Stalinism proved remarkably accurate. Our essential world view has been proved correct by the struggles in Los Angeles, Melbourne and crucially in Southern Africa. The coming revolutionary period demands not only firm loyalty to the revolutionary proletarian banner, but also the most aggressive intervention by communists into the coming mass movements of our class. The need of the hour is a strong and resolute international tendency absolutely and openly dedicated to the central idea that the proletariat itself must re-create its Fourth International. ●

### *I Would Like More Information About the LRP/COFI*

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# COFI Political Resolution

The following document, edited for publication, outlines the fundamental politics of the Communist Organization for the Fourth International. It was adopted at COFI's January 1995 international conference.

The Communist Organization for the Fourth International aims to resurrect the theory and practice of revolutionary Marxism and thereby to organize and educate the vanguard layers of the working class for the re-creation of the Fourth International, the world party of proletarian socialist revolution.

COFI is distinguished from all other organizations claiming to be socialist or communist by our commitment to the principle that the proletariat makes its own revolution, without benevolent leadership by condescending saviors from the middle classes. To this end we act at all times for the advance of revolutionary proletarian consciousness, above all for the development of the proletarian vanguard. Unlike reformists and centrists, our efforts are devoted to exposing, not hiding from the workers, the vacillations, capitulations and betrayals of those who presently lead the mass organizations of the workers and the oppressed.

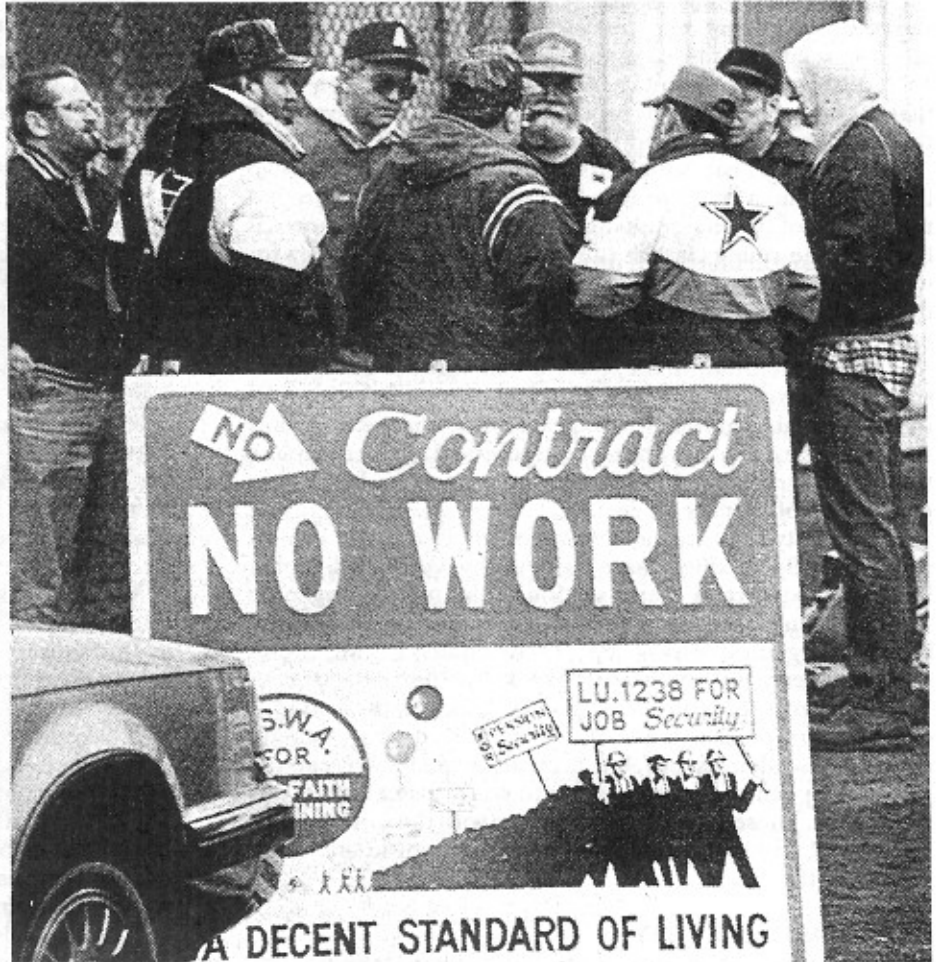
We write at a key turning point in world history. In 1990, in our book *The Life and Death of Stalinism*, we contrasted the first half of the 20th century — with its two world wars, Great Depression, fascism and Stalinism — to the present:

On the surface it may not look like we still live in the epoch of decay. ... Even through the postwar boom has come to an end and the possibility of severe crisis is now openly discussed within the Western bourgeoisie, the predominant view ... is that capitalism is successful. The collapse of the Eastern "socialist" regimes provides confirmation. (p. 243.)

Five years later appearance has come into line with reality. The supposed New World Order of U.S.-led stability after the "triumph of capitalism" now evokes only derisive laughter. The world economy has suffered several years of zero growth. The proletariat is now over half the world population, yet almost one-third of its members are jobless. The gap between rich and poor, between countries and within them, grows ever wider. In the U.S., the world's richest country, two-thirds of working people live at or below the standard officially described as "necessary for health, efficiency, the nurture of children and participation in community activities." In other words, the proletarian commodity, labor power, on which capitalism depends for its very existence, is being systematically destroyed.

The more that all justification for class rule crumbles, the

more the capitalist rulers show they will stop at nothing to stay in power. The genocide last year in Rwanda was only the most extreme of the vicious nationalist wars in Africa, ex-Yugoslavia, Central Asia and the Caucasus. On all continents, tidal waves of refugees flee their homelands. Capitalism offers no solution: only one savagery after another, in order to make a genuinely human existence appear hopeless.



March 1994: Steelworkers picket Wheeling plant, a "glitch" in "a new era of unprecedented cooperation," a business professor said. But compromising union chiefs find U.S. is not immune to world class struggle.

A human existence is possible. The productive forces have reached the point where life without starvation and homelessness is within reach, for all. Only the rule of one class over the rest prevents it. Clearly the world faces a choice between authentic socialism and an increasingly apparent barbarism. There is no room left for any alternative but proletarian revolution. Yet the bulk of the world's left remains dedicated to bourgeois "realism": electoralism, "democracy," "progressive" nationalism.

Although consciousness of the need for revolutionary change is growing, respect for Marxism as the guide to revolution is at its lowest point in the century, the result of Stalinism's hegemony, corruption and collapse — and the capitulations of the pseudo-revolutionary left. Under these

conditions COFI outlines the principles of Marxism on which all hope for humanity rests.

### **CAPITALISM AND ITS CLASSES**

Capitalism is the most advanced form of class society, based on the extraction of surplus value through wage labor. The two main classes in capitalist society, the bourgeoisie (capitalists) and proletariat (workers), are fundamental to the mode of production and stand in antagonistic relation to each other.

Although capitalism has gone much farther than any previous society in controlling nature, it has the least capacity for controlling its own social relations. Not only does the ruling class confront a hostile and powerful proletariat; in its internal relations the capitalists face one another only as owners of individual capitals. Among them anarchy reigns, so that the social relations of production assert themselves only through the system's blind laws.

The bourgeoisie is the class of large property owners who live off surplus value produced by others. It centers around the owners of the major means of production and finance. It has been the ruling class in the most advanced countries for two hundred years and has been unchallenged for world domination throughout the 20th century. Today, in one form or another, it rules everywhere.

The proletariat is the class of all those who own no significant property and are therefore compelled to live by the sale of labor power for wages, and to engage in a daily struggle for existence with the bourgeoisie. It centers around the mass workforces in industry and transport, key to the production of surplus value.

The petty bourgeoisie consists of small property owners who primarily produce their own surplus value and exploit few if any workers. A major section of the petty bourgeoisie in many countries is the peasantry. This class is also exploited by the bourgeoisie, which appropriates much of the surplus value the petty bourgeoisie produces.

Between bourgeoisie and proletariat stand the "middle-class" layers of salaried and self-employed professionals, managers, academics, etc., layers greatly expanded by capitalism in its epoch of decay in order to control and buy off the proletariat. These layers interpenetrate with the working class at one end and with the upper petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie at the other.

### **CAPITALISM IN DECAY**

Once progressive, capitalism has developed the productive forces to the point where class society and exploitation are no longer necessary. Capitalism is therefore the last class society in human history. Since it persists, as a world system it is reactionary and counterrevolutionary.

In the epoch of decay, capitalism's tendencies toward concentration and centralization of production have reached the point of monopolization. As a result, capitalism has ceased to develop the productive forces organically and has become a fetter on them. It generates severe international depressions, which worsen the longer the system survives.

The international counterpart of monopoly is imperialism. The world is dominated by a small number of imperialist powers which systematically appropriate surplus value from the weaker countries dependent on them and subordinate independent capital formation.

In its historical development capital produced the political instrument appropriate to it: the nation-state. The

bourgeois state is an organ of the ruling class designed to regulate through its monopoly of armed force the internal affairs of the bourgeoisie, the class conflict with the proletariat and international conflicts with other bourgeois forces.

In the epoch of capitalist decay, the nation-state has economically outlived its usefulness, since the means of production are now international and constantly confront national limits. Nevertheless, the nation-state remains a political necessity for capital, both as a tool for waging the struggle against rival capitalists and for dividing the working class. Attempts at peaceful international capitalist unity are doomed to failure. Capitalism remains a system at war with itself.

Only under the hegemony of dominant or conquering powers can capitalism achieve temporary unity. Hence the system is driven, on the one hand, toward imperialism and imperialist war and, on the other, towards the defensive bourgeois nationalism of imperialism's victims.

### **CAPITALISM AGAINST THE PROLETARIAT**

The growth and organization of the proletariat, capitalism's nemesis, compels the ruling class to use much of its surplus value not for productive accumulation but for stabilization and repression. The system greatly expands the state apparatus to control and buy off the masses as well as to regulate the intensifying competition within the ruling class.

The reserve army of the unemployed has grown to mammoth proportions and is a world-wide phenomenon. The imperialists are now able to use the threat of unemployment to reduce wages on an international basis.

Capitalism in decay steps up nationalism and militarization to divert and repress the class struggle. Fascism, the mobilization of petty-bourgeois, lumpenproletarian and labor-aristocratic elements on a radical "anti-capitalist" but in reality anti-working-class program, is the final resort of unstable national capitals.

Capitalism exacerbates every social division to keep the working class divided. It has extended the pre-capitalist oppression of women through the "double burden" of the family institution and exploitative labor, among other things. It has invented the reactionary ideologies of racism and imperialist nationalism. The age-old weapon of anti-Semitism has been revitalized to murderous proportions in order to deflect attacks on capitalism itself. Oppression of gays and lesbians, at times the most virulent of all, is derivative of the need to maintain the sanctity of the family.

Racism, called into existence by emerging capitalism in order to justify slavery in the Western hemisphere, became an instrument to create and defend imperialist domination of the "third world." Its super-exploitation of a layer of the working class undercuts all proletarian wages. In this epoch racism has become a major world-wide defense for dying capitalism, even to the point of inspiring genocide.

In this epoch, the demands of capitalism have resulted in the greatest migrations of human beings the world has ever known. Thus the proletariat has become even more interdependent. However, anti-immigrant chauvinism, spawned by imperialism, has been joined to racism and accelerated as a means of dividing the working class.

### **REFORMISM**

The state and industrial bureaucracies that flourish in this epoch have their counterparts in the worker's organizations, their parties and unions. Imperialism promotes a layer of the working class with a stake in the system: the

"labor aristocracy" of the highest paid and most secure workers, especially in the imperialist powers.

Resting on the aristocratic layer is the labor bureaucracy that serves capitalism as brokers of the workers' labor power. As such it is petty-bourgeois in its class nature, not proletarian. Its existence depends both on the survival of capitalism and on the continual reform of the system to bring gains to the workers in order to tie them to capitalism's survival.



*Immigrant workers around the world fight chauvinist attacks by capitalists.*

Ideologically, the labor aristocracy and bureaucracy reflect the middle-class and petty-bourgeois interpenetration. Historically, they developed the social-democratic theory of revisionism, the notion that socialism could be achieved not through revolution but out of the workers' constant pressure for reforms, which in any case would be the normal result of capitalism's development and modernization.

During prosperity, reformism favored limited reforms that would benefit the working class within the framework of capitalism. Today it basically stands for the retrenchment of past gains. Tomorrow, given a workers' upheaval to betray, some sections of reformism will talk of gains once again.

## STALINISM

The persistence of capitalism in its epoch of decay brought about a distinct form of decadent capitalism. The Soviet workers' state, condemned to isolation and backwardness by the absence of workers' revolutions in Europe in the 1920's, degenerated under the rule of the Stalinist bureau-

cracy and was overthrown by the counterrevolution of the 1930's. The social goal of the Stalinist ruling class was to defend and expand its national capital through relative autarky and incorporation of the proletariat: "socialism in one country."

Stalinist parties in the non-Stalinist countries stood for the extreme statification of capital (if not Stalinist rule itself). This was posed as a socialist solution to capitalism's crisis, but in reality meant a last-ditch defense of the national capital. Thus Stalinism is a special variant of reformism. Today most of the ex-Communist Parties tend toward more traditional forms of reformism.

In weaker nations where the local bourgeoisie was discredited and could not defend its class power, and where the working classes had been significantly defeated, efforts to defend against imperialism led to a vastly expanded state capitalism. In extreme cases this resulted in the construction of the post-World War II states modeled on the Stalinist Soviet Union. This is a negative confirmation and extension of the theory of permanent revolution.

Stalinist methods could at best achieve temporary success. Dragged down by the remaining workers' gains, they produced an inefficient capitalism that could not resolve economic crises and thereby made them permanent. This led inevitably to the devolution of Stalinism towards bourgeois methods and its eventual collapse.

Stalinist states are counterrevolutionary obstacles to socialism. Despite their anti-imperialist self-definition, they are props for world imperialism and played a crucial role in the postwar decades to keep the masses down. The USSR was also imperialist in its own right, subordinating its internal prisonhouse of nations as well as its conquered satellites.

## COMMUNISM AND THE WORKERS' STATE

The full development of the forces of production, the achievement of abundance for all and the flowering of humanity and human culture, require the establishment of communism, a classless society. Communism can be achieved only by the revolutionary transformation of society by the proletariat.

This transformation is carried out through transitional societies under workers' states (proletarian dictatorships). The tasks of a workers' state are to overcome the class divisions, oppression and economic barriers of capitalism, in order to develop the productive forces (above all, the working class itself) and a centralized, planned economy truly based on mass consciousness. The workers' state withers away as the proletariat disappears as a separate class.

A workers' state must be based upon the actual rule of the working class itself, exercised through mass-based institutions like soviets or workers' councils. Proletarian democracy demands the dictatorship of the proletariat, not over the proletariat. A workers' state must also be a center of the international class struggle against capitalism. "Socialism in one country" is an impossible goal and a self-defeating strategy.

## SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

A workers' state can be created only through a socialist revolution that overthrows the capitalist state. We reject the theory of "deformed workers' states" not created by any workers' revolution. There can be no peaceful transformation from capitalism to socialism: the capitalist state must be smashed through an armed workers' insurrection.

A socialist revolution must be led by a proletarian

vanguard party. Soviets, workers' councils, etc., the highest forms of the workers' united front, can act as vehicles for the revolutionary conquest of state power through the leadership of the vanguard party. "Spontaneous acts" of the working class — that is, mass acts of the proletariat without organized leadership and control of defined political forces — can have great positive significance. However, as long as such struggles are dominated by "spontaneous" — that is, non-revolutionary — consciousness, they cannot achieve proletarian revolution.

In no country is a bourgeois-democratic or any further capitalist, mixed-class or non-class stage necessary. The working class seeks to lead other classes and class elements, such as the peasantry and the lower middle strata, in a revolutionary alliance for international socialist revolution.

Given that in this epoch the proletariat has grown into a powerful and independent force, the bourgeoisie is forced to align with both remnants of pre-capitalist classes and reactionary anti-"bourgeois-democratic" forces to defend its rule. Thus the remaining democratic tasks of the bourgeois revolutions can be achieved only by the working class through socialist revolution. That is, the democratic revolution is a by-product of the socialist revolution, not an inevitable stage ahead of it. This is the theory of permanent revolution.

Since capital is international, the proletariat must be internationalist. A proletarian revolution in one country must spread especially to the proletariat of the dominant imperialist powers, if the workers' state is to develop into socialism.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The revolutionary vanguard party represents the most advanced class-conscious layer of the working class. Since the working class must be independent of all other classes, the vanguard party is the party of only one class and centers its work within the working class. The vanguard party in each country must be a section of the re-created Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

The International and its parties are democratic centralist fighting organizations: they embody strict, disciplined unity in action combined with internal democracy. Within the party and International, the basic right of a majority is that its policies are carried out as party policy. The basic rights of a minority is that its views can be heard and considered within the party and that they are appropriately represented on leading party bodies.

The fundamental task of communists is to build the vanguard party. This requires distinguishing between layers within the class in order to win the emerging vanguard. Leninists know that even mass revolutionary parties cannot skip over the advanced layer in order to lead the mass of workers.

The International is always necessary; building it is the prime task of all communists at all times. An International is not the fortuitous outcome of a process of building parties in each country, a nationalist federational strategy in disguise.

The proletariat requires no middle-class or petty-bourgeois elements to lead it. Nevertheless, the proletarian vanguard welcomes intellectuals, middle-class and petty-bourgeois people into its ranks. They must be tested over time and must break from their previous class backgrounds in order to represent proletarian interests. At all times, communists work to establish the working-class nature of the party in its composition as well as its program.

## THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The International is Marxist, Leninist and Trotskyist. We

trace our heritage to the Communist League and First International of Marx and Engels; the Second International and, after 1900, its revolutionary wings led by Lenin and Luxemburg; the Russian revolution and the Third International of Lenin and Trotsky; the Left Opposition, International Communist League and Fourth International; and the fight led by Trotsky against middle-class influences in the Fourth International.

The Fourth International was betrayed by its middle-class leadership in the wake of the proletarian defeats during and after World War II. It was definitively proved dead as a revolutionary force by its class collaborationism in the Bolivian revolution of 1952.

Today the revolutionary banner is carried by pre-party propaganda groups, currently COFI. Pending the re-creation of the Fourth International, COFI operates in the spirit of democratic centralism; it is prevented from becoming fully democratic centralist solely by limited resources.

Our resurrection of Marxist theory and practice began with the fight in the International Socialists (U.S.) in 1972-73 that led to the founding of the Revolutionary Socialist League in 1973 and the League for the Revolutionary Party in 1976. We have developed our views from the main lessons of the first four Congresses of the Third International, the documents and struggles of the Communist Left Opposition and the Fourth International — and the gains of COFI itself as embodied in the political thrust of past LRP-U.S. convention documents, our book *The Life and Death of Stalinism*, and other documents, most recently the document by the LRP-Australia, "The Role of the Revolutionary Party in the Development of Class Consciousness."

## THE CLASS STRUGGLE

We stand for vanguard party leadership of all workers' struggles. We oppose all attempts by capital to intervene in working-class organizations. Democracy and other workers' gains can only be achieved by fighting the ruling class and its state, not by collaborating with them.

The mass workers' organizations today are led by reformist bureaucrats who inevitably side with the interests of capitalism in the class struggle. In all struggles communists warn and fight against the role of the labor bureaucracy in holding back the workers organizationally and ideologically.

The social democratic and labor parties, by and large, were gains of the working class that formed them. Today in general they are bourgeois workers parties. Their characteristic contradiction is that they still reflect the workers' past achievement but are used by the bourgeoisie against their working-class base. After the reformist parties made their inherent commitment to the bourgeoisie clear in practice during the First World War, Leninists have considered them to be counterrevolutionary.

Participation in and electoral support for the social democratic and labor parties are possible tactics because of their proletarian base, tactics to be used when the mass of workers see them as viable alternatives to the openly bourgeois parties. We combat the view that they are workers' institutions that require permanent electoral support.

In contrast, the trade unions, even when led by betraying social democrats or other reformists, are not inherently counterrevolutionary institutions, and communists do not favor their termination. They represent historic gains of the working class, and their membership is restricted to that class.

The difference between the labor and social democratic

parties and the trade unions is that the former is a category of political party, while the latter is a special form of the united front of the working class. Many tactics, including critical support and entry, can be appropriate for building the revolutionary party — by splitting the working-class base away from the reformist parties. In the case of the trade unions, the task is not to split the workers from the unions but to replace the bureaucracy with the leadership of the revolutionary party.

Ruling-class ideology has invaded the working class, not only through reformism and Stalinism but also through middle-class tendencies which falsely speak in the name of proletarian revolution: "centrism." It is crucial to expose and combat such leftists, who aim to use the working class as a battering ram to empower a variant of capitalism in the name of socialism or "the people."

The revolutionary party combats pseudo-Marxist theories that give a central role to the middle class, whose members are often hostile to both the "undeserving" bourgeoisie and the "disorderly" working class. They promote a "socialism" that offers intellectuals and managers power over workers (in the latter's name). Hence the "middle-class Marxist" theories justifying Stalinism and social democracy.

### DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLES

We support struggles against oppression subject only to the higher interest of the international working class. We promulgate permanent revolution: the unfulfilled bourgeois-democratic tasks can be carried out only through socialist revolution. We stand for working-class leadership of all struggles against the ruling class.

In the fight against oppression, racism, reaction and fascism, we combat reliance upon bourgeois forces. The mass organizations of the oppressed are led by middle-class reformists. We counterpose proletarian leadership to all these forces, no matter how militant.

We defend struggles for women's liberation, always emphasizing the conditions and needs of working-class women. We stand for the right of women to work outside the family as wage laborers and for their complete equality. We fight for full democratic rights for gays and lesbians.

We defend all struggles for equality and justice by racial and national minorities, fighting for leadership by working-class sections of such groups.

We defend the rights of immigrants and campaign for open borders for refugees fleeing political persecution or economic misery.

In countries where the peasant masses demand division rather than collectivization of the land, communists will in general support this demand in order to demonstrate by example, not force, the need for socialist farming.

Authentic communists are materialists and atheists. We oppose all religious hierarchies, which use the idea of a supernatural realm to defend class society in general and decadent capitalism in particular. They take advantage of the masses driven into deeper and deeper misery by capitalism who seek solace in religion. So-called liberation theology and its perpetuation of superstition is no answer to clerical fascism and *its* superstition.

However, since religious persecution may in some cases play the same role as racial, national or sexual oppression, we defend the right of the masses to practice their religious faith; religion will fade away as a result of consciousness gained through struggle.

### IMPERIALISM AND WAR

As Leninists and internationalists, we always and everywhere defend the rights of oppressed nations against their oppressors. We defend the right of self-determination for oppressed nations. We give military-technical support to oppressed nations and nationalist forces in military combat



Canadian workers at Ontario Parliament protesting unemployment insurance cuts.

with imperialism. This implies no political support to nationalist leaders and nationalist ideologies, which are inherently bourgeois.

We argue against the masses choosing national independence, whenever that separatist path can be avoided. Our attitude toward the national question is governed by the paramount interests of the world proletariat.

In inter-imperialist wars we oppose all sides. In any imperialist country our policy is revolutionary defeatism. We reject pacifism and campaign for the tactics of the proletarian military policy: arming and training the workers under the control of their own class organizations. In no case do we align ourselves with the nationalism of imperialist powers, no matter what benevolent disguise it may take — including economic sanctions presented as a means of forcing an end to oppression.

We oppose the formation and strengthening of imperialist blocs, without favoring in opposition the nationalism of individual imperialist countries.

### STRATEGY AND TACTICS

The revolutionary party uses all tactics consistent with our goal of advancing proletarian consciousness and socialist revolution. The working-class vanguard must understand who its allies and enemies are. In particular, we always call by their right names bourgeois nationalists, counterrevolutionary reformists and vacillating centrists who claim to speak in the name of the working class — especially if we are

temporarily allied with such elements in concrete actions.

We reject long-term entries into Social-Democratic, Labor or Stalinist parties, and long-term united fronts. Both tactics rendered into strategies become blockades to the formation of the vanguard party.

We reject electoralism as a strategy for socialist revolution, since it is necessarily reformist. Nevertheless, the party should intervene in bourgeois elections with propaganda, candidates and critical support tactics, in order to take the opportunity to popularize the need for socialist revolution.

We reject popular fronts between the working class and bourgeois parties. The working class cannot share political power with even the shadow of the bourgeoisie; governmental alliances with such elements mean subordination to bourgeois politics. Party members may not occupy positions in bourgeois governments — including those of “third world,” Stalinist and post-Stalinist countries as well as in the imperialist powers. We reject so-called anti-imperialist united fronts as a version of the popular front; they stand in absolute contradiction to the permanent revolution.

We reject guerrillaism as a strategy for socialist revolution: it runs counter to class struggle and the development of proletarian class consciousness. Nevertheless, the vanguard party may use guerrilla tactics as an adjunct to the mass struggle in specific situations.

Entry, critical support, united fronts and military-technical support are weapons in our arsenal. In using such tactics revolutionaries maintain our political independence and act on our right to publicize our own views and fight for the revolutionary party.

Unity of our class in action is critically important, given the reliance of the imperialists on a divisive strategy toward the proletariat. Therefore we stress calls for mass action like the general strike, although this is neither a panacea nor a revolutionary insurrection *per se*. Action precedes consciousness. Mass action is the key to carrying out our transitional demands, which help develop unity of the working class.

## TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

Although the immanent drive of the proletariat's struggles is to challenge the capitalist system, the workers confront their class enemies before they are fully class-conscious. Therefore the revolutionary party joins with non-class-conscious workers in struggle for the immediate interests of the proletariat and seeks to show that, whatever partial and temporary victories are won under capitalism in this epoch, the only real solution to the masses' needs is socialist revolution.

The transitional program is designed as a bridge to advance the consciousness of the fighting masses in times of mass struggle. It consists of algebraically formulated demands which are part of the solution of the future workers' state and which summarize fundamental needs of the workers as well as the exploited and oppressed masses. The fight for transitional demands enables the vanguard to demonstrate the resistance of the bourgeoisie and the betrayals of the reformists, as well as the power of the working class and its drive beyond the limits of capitalism.

The transitional program is an action program of demands which the vanguard party can agitate for without requiring acceptance of socialist revolution in advance. For this to succeed, the advanced layer of workers must be constantly prepared by systematic propaganda for socialist solutions and on the vanguard party's use of the transitional program.

Tactical use of the transitional program depends on local

and temporary conditions, above all the movement and consciousness of the proletariat. At times when the masses are not ready to go into motion, agitation (instead of propaganda) for the transitional program masks the socialist revolutionary program and promotes reformist illusions.

We list some transitional demands here, the most important for the present conjuncture, to illustrate the method.

Reducing the work force is increasingly becoming a key capitalist weapon in the class struggle. We stand for *jobs for all, a full program of public works, and the sliding scale of hours to find jobs for all available workers*. Since this directly confronts the capitalists' need to reduce wages in order to raise the rate of profit, we insist that the demand is valid as a human need, independent of considerations of profitability. The wealth needed for these critical measures can be obtained only by violating capitalist property: *Expropriate the Banks and Industries!*

Inflation is an endemic disease of capitalism in decay, at various times in different countries. We stand for an *escalating scale of wages*, likewise independent of profitability.

Police violence against the working class, especially its oppressed sections, is rising, along with right-wing thug attacks. We stand for *workers' self-defense guards, workers' militias and the arming of the proletariat* as steps toward building the workers' revolutionary armed force.

Privatization of state-owned means of production has become a widespread weapon of the ruling classes to cut back workers' gains, especially in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist states. In opposing the drive towards bourgeoisification and privatization, we stand for *expropriation of firms and branches of industry supplying products or jobs vital for the workers' existence*. We combat parochial and syndicalist forms of workers' self-management as genuine solutions outside the context of the seizure of state power.

The revolutionary party must at all times make explicit the revolutionary implications of the transitional demands to the advanced workers. We combat all notions that reforms alone or sectoral struggles can win lasting gains in this period. The proletarian program points to the unification and centralization of workers' struggles and the necessity of the workers' state to carry it out.

In sum, the revolutionary party relies on the mass struggles of the proletariat and the development of its political consciousness, not on maneuvers hidden from our class. As a principle, authentic revolutionaries do not hide their independent banner, program and party. We proudly adopt as our own Trotsky's motto, “Say what is” to the working class. And the leading formulation of what we are *for* and have to proclaim to the working class is embodied in our name: the Communist Organization for the Fourth International. ●

## Fund Appeal

Our last appeal for donations was generously answered by an unusually large number of readers. We are very grateful to all who contributed.

As a working-class organization with modest resources, we must count on the help of readers and friends. Our publications are priced below their cost of production, not just because we aim to overthrow the law of value, but to encourage working-class people to read them. Please send whatever you can afford to: Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008.



# Debating *The Life and Death of Stalinism: Workers Power's Moribund Theory*

by Arthur Rymer

Karl Marx wrote that historical events which first occur as tragedy often re-occur as farce. He forgot to add that a third appearance is possible — as burlesque.

Under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, the Bolshevik-Leninists in the 1920's and '30's had to explain an utterly new and unexpected phenomenon: the tragedy of the first degenerating workers' state in history, Stalin's USSR. It is no surprise that they made mistakes; the wonder is how few there were and how well they could predict the direction of world developments. Standing in the footsteps of Marx and Lenin, the Trotskyists knew that scientific theory was indispensable in waging the class struggle. They kept Marxism alive in the face of Stalinist corruption.

In contrast, the pretenders to Trotskyism after World War II were theoretically arid. Trotsky's analysis of the USSR as a degenerating workers' state was rendered into an orthodox dogma and frozen in time. Marxism, which has at its heart the concept of permanent motion and change of all phenomena, was embalmed. The pseudo-Trotskyists never analyzed the basic drives of Stalinism; there was no attempt in the half-century since Trotsky wrote *The Revolution Betrayed* to update the theory and bring into account the enormous historical events of the war and its aftermath.

Most appalling, they failed to notice at the time that Stalinism had supposedly overthrown capitalism in East Europe and China after the Second World War. The "discovery" of a near-dozen new "deformed workers' states" was made only years later (and thereby Trotsky's conclusion that Stalinism was counterrevolutionary was dumped, in reality if not rhetoric.) That above all shows the degenerated, deformed and farcical character of Trotsky's epigones.

Today, as we enter a new era in world history, the pseudo-Trotskyists' failure to understand events is shameful. As we have shown in these pages, the collapse of Stalinism has completely disoriented the epigones and exposed their inability to pursue revolutionary political practice. And their attempts to explain the world are pure burlesque.

## WORKERS POWER'S REVIEW

Workers Power in Britain is one of the few self-styled Trotskyist groups that still makes serious attempts to justify its politics in terms of theory. They publish a theoretical journal and produced a book on the origins and nature of Stalinism in 1982. Now they have reviewed our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory* by Walter Daum, in order to challenge our analysis that the Stalinist system was a statified form of capitalism.

A striking feature of the review is that, even though it appears four years after the book was published, it draws no lessons from the downfall of Stalinism. This is especially odd for Workers Power and its international affiliates (LRCI): unlike many who defended the "deformed workers' states," LRCI still regards Russia & Co. as proletarian. One would think they would use the opportunity to show that history has validated their views. But they ignore this critical practical test in favor of lengthy but superficial polemics on other matters of Marxist theory and Soviet history.

We reviewed Workers Power's book on Stalinism years

ago, in depth. They never replied, and many of their arguments now are repetitions of errors we refuted years ago. Nor have they answered other polemics of ours on their politics. Their first effort to take up a public debate with us over fundamental questions, this review reflects the contradiction between their revolutionary facade and the reformism that underlies their world view and keeps bubbling to the surface.



Leon Trotsky, murdered in 1940, misrepresented afterward.

To respond to the issues they raise we have to go deeper into the underlying theoretical and practical issues than they do. Because this issue of *PR* is already long, we have divided our reply into two parts; the second will be in our next issue.

(The WP review, by Peter Main and Clare Heath, appeared in *Permanent Revolution* No. 10, Spring/Summer 1994. We will send any interested reader a copy of the review.)

## UNDERSTANDING STALINISM

*The Life and Death of Stalinism* was published just after the revolutionary tidal wave that swept across East Europe in 1989, overthrowing Communist Party rule in country after country. The book challenged the most insidious ideology of our times: cynicism about human nature in general and the capacities of the proletariat in particular. Against the barrage of propaganda proclaiming the demise of communism, we argued that the collapse of Stalinism would in the end open the road for the re-creation of a genuine Marxist vanguard of the working class. That is because we have always understood Stalinism as a key prop for world imperialism, serving both to betray anti-capitalist revolutionary struggles from within and to stabilize the international balance of power.

Our book was based on articles and documents produced over a fifteen-year period, writings whose predictions about the direction of Stalinism have been amply verified in practice. Amid a plethora of different state capitalist, third system, and degenerated workers' state formulas which

sprung up on the left, ours was the only analysis that used Marxist tools to explain the laws of motion, and thereby the destiny, of the Stalinist system.

We started from Trotsky's mid-1930's analysis that petty-bourgeois bureaucratic rule had turned the USSR into a degenerated workers' state, no longer advancing toward socialism but decaying back toward outright capitalism. In contrast to Trotsky, we saw that capitalism had been restored in the USSR by the late 1930's, despite the remnants of genuine proletarian conquests (like the right to a job, state-subsidized health care and education, nationalized property forms).

And unlike most "state capitalists" as well as those who swore fealty to Trotsky's words without his understanding, we saw that these remnants undermined the system. We agreed with Trotsky that Stalinism was fundamentally a weak, ephemeral phenomenon. As a system it was a deformed capitalism that could not coexist with the remaining gains of the workers' revolution. Trotsky thought Stalin's USSR too unstable to survive the world war; his error was not to see that the capitalist counterrevolution he foresaw had already occurred. It temporarily strengthened the ruling bureaucracy by imposing a terrible defeat on the proletariat.

In particular, we predicted the devolution of statified capitalism toward traditional bourgeois forms. We showed that the system's contradictions compelled the rulers to try to reform their system by introducing traditional bourgeois weapons (like astronomical inflation and mass unemployment) against the workers — and ultimately to abandon Stalinism itself. We also foresaw the limits on privatization, given capitalism's underlying drive toward centralization.

On the political side, we warned that if proletarian communist leaderships did not emerge in time, the political revolutions sweeping East Europe would stay within the bounds of a backward capitalism and therefore result not in democracy but in a shift to Bonapartism and ultimately fascism. This tendency was predictable under Gorbachev and Walesa when the book was written; it is now obvious to all under the West's favorite "democrat," Yeltsin, who tries to rule by decree, plebiscite and militarism. And it has been verified by the racist campaigns and ethnic slaughter in ex-Yugoslavia under the rule of nationalist demagogues (who continue to be propped up as local strongmen by Western powers).

It was working-class resistance, notably the massive Polish workers' upheaval of 1980-81, that undermined the self-confidence of the Stalinist ruling classes and crippled their hold on society. This showed again the centrality of the proletariat for social progress in the present epoch. Further, the workers' struggle was triggered by the Stalinists' drive to intensify exploitation. This drive stems from the underlying laws of motion of capitalism discovered by Marx, starting with the law of value. As the book shows in detail, the laws of capitalism applied to the statified capitalist states of the East as well as to the "normal" capitalist states of the West.

Workers dealt the hated Stalinists decisive blows in 1989. But the masses' achievements were usurped by alien forces drawn from the Stalinists themselves and from bourgeois elements that decaying Stalinism had nourished. The workers were unable to re-create Bolshevik parties in time to lead the revolutions to socialism.

Thus, in the countries where Stalinism was ousted, one form of capitalism, heavily deformed by the remnants of workers' revolutionary gains, was replaced by another. Nothing else explains the political transition in which the bulk of the ruling nomenklatura bureaucrats remained in

power economically — many in fact have vastly enriched themselves and legalized their private holdings. According to an academic study of Eastern Europe, "every second top manager in the private sector used to be the director of a socialist enterprise." (Cited in the *Economist*, April 16, 1994.)

## PEACEFUL SOCIAL COUNTERREVOLUTION?

Our political tendency looks at the "Russian question," like all questions, from the starting point that the proletariat is the only progressive class in modern society and that the struggle for human freedom and against barbarism rests on the shoulders of the proletarian vanguard. As with Trotsky, we see the question of working-class leadership as the decisive question of this epoch. The socialist future depends upon the ability of the most conscious elements of the proletariat to successfully build the revolutionary party and place it in the forefront of the class struggle.

Because they have abandoned these principles, the middle-class "Marxists" whom our book criticizes face unanswerable problems. If the Stalinist states were workers' states, why did the workers not defend them? Why did the rulers, who according to this theory had their own *inherent* caste interest in defending state property, choose instead the goal of destitution? Why do the disputes among bureaucrats occur over the speed and allocation of privatizing property and not over the aim itself? How do the same armed forces now defend capitalist property, when they defended "proletarian" property only a few years ago?

Alternatively, if these states represented some non-capitalist class society ("bureaucratic collectivism" or whatever), how did the ruling class change its class character as a bloc when the states turned capitalist? Taking this logic to its absurd limit, the bureaucratic collectivism theorist Julius Jacobson calls the changeover a "unique kind of one-dimensional 'class struggle' in which a ruling class is fighting fiercely to overthrow itself." (*New Politics*, Winter 1995.)

In either case, how could a ruling-class change occur so peacefully? The idea of "workers'" or "new-class" states gradually turning capitalist confirms the cynical and reformist character of all such formulas. In the case of the workers' state theorists, the claim that the ex-Stalinist states can quietly lose their proletarian class content is just the mirror image of their notion, concocted in the 1940's, that "deformed workers' states" could be created without working-class revolutions. (Our book analyzes at length the shameful history of this anti-Marxist theory among Trotsky's epigones.)

Workers Power, despite a subjective commitment to revolution stronger than many other pseudo-Trotskyists, has been forced by the combination of inescapable world events and its basic political outlook to come up with its own version of a peaceful social counterrevolution. It first appeared in July 1990, in the case of East Germany:

**Does the GDR prove that a peaceful overthrow of a workers' state is possible? If the answer is yes, and we believe it must be at least for Eastern Europe, this appears to bring us into head-on collision with Trotsky.**

And so it does. Workers Power tried to dodge this obvious problem by quoting Trotsky in 1936, saying that Stalin's new Soviet constitution "opens up for the bureaucracy 'legal' roads for the economic counterrevolution, that is, the restoration of capitalism by means of a 'cold stroke'."

What this meant to Trotsky was simply that the bureaucracy had completed its *political* counterrevolution, thereby blocking any peaceful transition to socialism. Further, the

capitalist, or *social*, counterrevolution had been placed on the bureaucratic agenda — the new constitution provided a legal facade. In *The Revolution Betrayed* he amply proved it.

But this in no way meant that Trotsky thought social counterrevolution could be *peaceful*. A year later he wrote, "Without a victorious civil war the bureaucracy cannot give birth to a new ruling class." In contrast to Workers Power's lawyerlike attempts to dredge up a "precedent" for peaceful social counterrevolution, Trotsky's 1936 article foretold history. In the great purge of 1936-38, which he called a "preventive civil war," millions of workers and party members were killed; the state apparatus (army, party, bureaucracy) was decapitated, smashed and replaced. But it was done "legally," by use of the secret police and the courts, not from outside the state structure. This was the "cold stroke."

The civil war culminated with the smashing of the workers' state and the consolidation of statified capitalism on the eve of World War II. Trotsky did not recognize this as the completion of the process of bureaucratic social counterrevolution he had seen so rapidly developing. But he was fully aware of the direction of the process — and that it was violent in the extreme. Workers Power's would-be loophole proves the opposite of what it was supposed to.

Trotsky had another name for LRCI's theory of peaceful

social counterrevolution: "unwinding the film of reformism in reverse." Those who think peaceful counterrevolution is possible are just reflecting their underlying expectation of a peaceful transformation of capitalism into socialism. That is the heart of classic reformism. It is the subsurface logic inherent in Workers Power's political outlook. And as we will show, Workers Power's misunderstanding of the dynamics of social transformation reflects a general failure to understand motion and its laws as they operate through contradiction.

#### WHAT IS THE LAW OF VALUE?

According to WP and LRCI, the alleged workers' states are proletarian because the law of value does not dominate their economies. But WP misrepresents Marx's law of value; their review harps on it a great deal without saying what they mean by it. To track down their conception we have to turn to their book on Stalinism, where they define it this way:

**Capitalism is the mode of production in which both the prerequisites for production, including labor power, and the products themselves take the form of commodities; it is generalized commodity production. That is to say, all goods are produced for the market. On the market they are exchanged, in the last analysis, on the basis of the amount of socially necessary labor contained in each commodity. This is the law of value. (*The Degenerated Revolution*, p. 26.)**

No, that is only the beginning of the law of value. Equilibrium and exchange of equivalents are the surface appearance. Equal exchange is violated from the start, by the tendency for the rate of profit to equalize (what Marx called "capitalist communism.") Further, as we showed in our book, for Marx the law of value as it develops generates growing inequality, conflict and crises. These tendencies of capitalism, which mean misery to the working classes, certainly reflect contradictions but are hardly violations of capitalism's laws; they are inherent in them. (That is the huge difference between Marx's analysis of capitalism's laws and that of his predecessors — and reformist successors.) In Marx's words:

**It is evident that the laws of appropriation or of private property, laws that are based on the production and circulation of commodities, become by their own inner and inexorable dialectic changed into their very opposite. The exchange of equivalents, the original operation with which we started, has now become turned around in such a way that there is only an apparent exchange. (*Capital*, Vol. I, Chapter 24, Section 1.)**

Likewise, Engels observes in *Anti-Dühring*:

**The value form of products ... already contains in germ the whole capitalist form of production, the antagonism between capitalists and wage workers, the industrial reserve army, crises.**

In this epoch of capitalist decay, we can add, imperialism mandates such unequal exchange. The disproportionate appropriation by powerful monopolies, the systematic robbery of large sections of Asia, Africa and Latin America by a few imperialist countries is not the total negation but the lawful operation of the law of value itself.

#### LRCI'S STABLE CAPITALISM

WP and LRCI have taken their theory of the law of value to absurdity. In contemplating the possibility of capitalist stabilization in today's world, Martin Suchanek wrote:

**The transition from a bureaucratically planned economy to capitalism is proving much harder than expected:**

## THE LIFE AND DEATH OF STALINISM

A Resurrection of Marxist Theory  
by Walter Daum

*The Marxist analysis that makes today's events understandable and shows the working-class way forward.*

A thoughtful, and indeed in many ways, an ideologically exciting book. Whether you accept its main thesis or not, and . . . this reviewer does not, it will still challenge your presuppositions and force you to rethink your ideas from top to bottom in the most rigorous way. And unlike most would-be Marxist texts these days, it is written in intelligible English, which is no small gain as well. *Al Richardson, Revolutionary History*

The analysis of Stalinism as a "deformed capitalist state" made by Walter Daum is very persuasive. The idea that it was a particular form of state capitalism because of its origins in a defeated workers revolution has much to commend it. . . . Read this book by all means. . . . But heed our "health warning." His aim . . . is not to give Trotskyism a decent burial: on the contrary, he wants to revive the corpse and give it a facelift.

**Communist Review**

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making the law of value the central regulator of the economy once again is no mere technical detail. . . .

We have outlined the key structural changes that will be necessary for capitalism to be finally imposed on these advanced transitional countries, or moribund workers' states. How — *post festum* — might we recognize when this has been effectively carried through?

Through the deceptive prism of bourgeois economic indicators certain features should be observable, for example, when national production bounces back out of the depths of its present slump in Eastern Europe to the extent that a clean cycle of recovery is obvious; when this growth is non-inflationary and accomplishes a reduction in budget deficits. (*Trotskyist International* No. 9, 1992.)

So capitalism triumphs when the economy makes a decisive leap forward out of its slump under the "workers' state" — that is, for LRCI, capitalism solves the economic crisis that the proletarian state cannot handle! If taken seriously, this ought to mean that capitalism is progressive. Whatever was intended, for LRCI "defense of the workers' states" clearly means defense of backwardness.

Not since the Spartacists declared that Cambodia must be a workers' state because its economy was too primitive to be capitalist has such a delectable analytic dish been served. Our compliments to those who cooked it up.

Workers Power will wait forever for Russia and Eastern Europe to turn into anything approaching an efficiently operating capitalist system governed by their textbook law of value. The convulsions the ex-Stalinist states are going through are only the latest corroboration of Marx's analysis.

In passing, we note LRCI's marvelous new theoretical wrinkle in defining the Stalinist states as "moribund workers' states." "Deformed workers' states" was bad enough, since it referred to countries the workers never ruled. But calling "transitional" societies moribund raises the question of what they could possibly be transitional to. (And in what way are they "advanced transitional countries"? Even according to LRCI, they're teetering on the edge of capitalism.) All this nonsense leaves the distinct impression that the theory, reflecting the society it defends, is moribund.

Contrary to the Western celebrators and many defenders of the workers' state theory, the collapse of Stalinism was not a symptom of world capitalist renewal but another giant step in the mounting economic and social crisis undermining the stability of world capitalism. Western bourgeois "statesmen" are nostalgic for the "predictable" era of the Cold War.

WP, however, does not allow the reality of capitalism in decay to undermine its notion of a system based on economic stability. Seeing imperialism recover during the postwar prosperity bubble, they reached their pragmatic conclusion that the present epoch is not the revolutionary era described by Lenin and Trotsky but a series of up and down periods in which a classically pure law of value can operate at any time.

In truth, the present epoch is characterized not only by revolutionary upheavals but also by great depressions, world wars and — tragically — counterrevolutionary defeats. The interval of capitalist prosperity could occur only because the postwar defeat of the working class by Stalinism prevented socialist revolutions from overthrowing war-torn world capitalism. This long-held position of ours, part of our debate with the LRCI over the nature of the epoch (see *PR* 33), is confirmed by the gutting of counterrevolutionary Stalinism and the resulting breakdown of capitalist stability.

Workers Power cannot understand Stalinism because it

does not understand capitalism or its laws of motion, laws that characterized the political economy of the East as well as the West.

#### VALUE IN A WORKERS' STATE

Nevertheless, Workers Power claims that our "whole case rests on a revision of Marxist economic categories." Their main objection is that wages under Stalinism do not represent the same relation as under capitalism. They write:

Daum's case relies upon an inadequate definition of capitalism. He fails to recognize that capitalism is generalized commodity production, which means centrally that labor has become a commodity (labor power); it is the commodification of labor power which is essential to the existence of capitalism and which Daum fails to prove existed in the USSR after 1939. (p. 143.)

Part of this charge is ludicrous. Our whole book is based on the fact that labor power as a commodity is central to capitalism. In fact a page earlier they charge us with insisting "that the existence of wage labor and the operation of the law of value, rather than the production of commodities, are the chief defining characteristics of capitalism."

Anyone with any pretense to Marxism knows that "wage labor" means the commodification of labor power; it is the key to capitalism's generalized commodity production. This is spelled out in the book. The reason for WP's contradictory statements is that they try to distinguish the law of value from the production of commodities. Even though they say "production" and "mode of production," their definition of the law of value centers instead on exchange — as in their demand to see a stable exchange system in place before recognizing the existence of capitalism in East Europe. This notion echoes the classic reformist identification of capitalism as a mode of exchange rather than production.

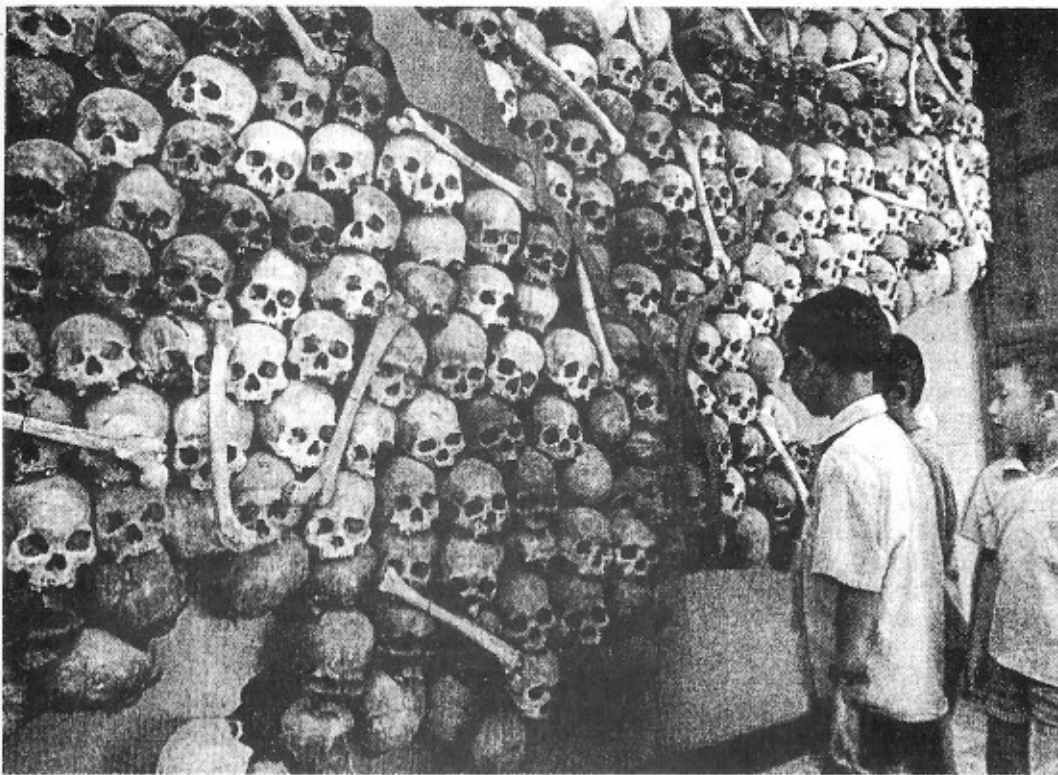
Contradictions aside, WP's purpose is to claim that labor could not have been commodified in the Soviet Union:

**With the abolition of capitalist private property in the main means of production, the wage-labor relationship is qualitatively undermined. In this theoretical model of the transitional economy as a whole (that is to say including both state and private sectors) the wage form no longer expresses the relations of exploitation between capitalist and worker . . . (p. 146.)**

True, the overthrow of capitalism by the working class, and its replacement by a workers' state as in the early Soviet Union, qualitatively undermines the exploitation of labor and *over time* even the very existence of classes. But Workers Power also wants to apply this reasoning to the new "degenerate workers' states" (East Europe, China, Cuba, etc.). Here it was capitalist forces, Stalinist and even bourgeois nationalist, that statified private property. As WP acknowledges, the living proletariat was not instrumental in the takeovers. The Stalinists' nationalist aim was to protect the surplus-value produced at home from imperialist appropriation.

In the former colonial and semi-colonial countries, what capital resources existed had to be mobilized centrally in pursuit of national development. Central control over foreign trade was essential lest the world market dominate the economy. The state officials became the appropriators of surplus value, members of a capitalist class alien to the proletariat. And the working classes had to be propitiated because they would otherwise refuse to be exploited at the sacrificial rate deemed necessary to build the new national economies.

To mobilize capital and enlist workers' support, the new



*Cambodian memorial: skulls of victims of "workers' state" massacres.*

rulers had to "plan" the economy and offer sops on the model of Stalin's USSR. The concessions had the unintended effect of eroding the planners' discipline over labor and the rate of exploitation. The elimination of private property and the guarantee of jobs made exploitation inefficient — but these measures certainly did not undermine exploitation overall, "qualitatively" as WP has it. That is why statified capitalism was a deformed variant, deformed and in fact doomed by the workers' gains.

Workers Power misleadingly confuses the genuine workers state led by Lenin and Trotsky (whose goal was indeed to do away with the wage-labor relation and exploitation) with the doomed pseudo-workers' states of the Stalin and his imitators (which tightened the workers' subordination to wages).

As well, they insist that in a workers' state both exploitation and value are eliminated in "both state and in private sectors." However, this was not the Bolshevik's interpretation of the USSR of the 1920's. The Left Opposition, writing in 1927, argued that the *workers' state* itself as an employer was not exploitative, although exploitation by private capital still existed. But this was not only over the private sector: value produced in state-run industries was also being appropriated by private capitalists:

**The appropriation of surplus value by a workers' state is not, of course, exploitation. But in the first place, we have a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions. The swollen and privileged administrative apparatus devours a very considerable part of our surplus value. In the second place, the growing bourgeoisie, by means of trade and gambling on the abnormal disparity of prices, appropriates a part of the surplus value created by our state industry. (Trotsky, Zinoviev, et al., *Platform of the Opposition*.)**

In a genuine workers' state where the proletariat rules, it does not exploit itself. That portion of value which is not returned directly to individual workers is used by the collective working class to run its state in its own interest. WP's

static concept of the law of value, positing individual notes in a sea of perpetual competition, can provide no understanding of value or surplus value under such conditions.

The problem for the Trotskyists in the isolated workers' state of the 1920's was that the bureaucracy and other capitalist elements were draining increasing portions of surplus value away from the collective proletariat. The threat was that the parasitic fattening on surplus value would culminate in the restoration of exploitation.

As we said when citing this passage in our book, "Coming from the central programmatic document of the Left Opposition, this subverts the theories of various modern Trotskyists." Workers Power does not attempt to refute or even refer to our citation and argument. And the virtual absence of value and surplus value is essential to WP's view, not only of Stalinism and the transitional state, but also of the socialist revolution and the entire revolutionary process.

#### **WHOSE REVISION OF MARXISM?**

The WP review continues:

**In a post-capitalist society in transition towards socialism, wages would represent an entitlement to a definite proportion of the social stock of goods, in the first instance based on how much each person put into the stock. But this is not commodity exchange since the "value" of labor, its share of social wealth, is now determined prior to production. Wages, whether in the form of currency or certificates, are not a mediation between labor and capital that establishes the social value of individual labor, because this is established from the outset. ... (p. 146.)**

This sounds very reminiscent of Marx, and it is — of Marx writing not about the transitional workers' state but about a much more advanced society, the first stage of communism! Here is Marx, in an excerpt cited in our book:

**Within the cooperative society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not**

exchange their products; just as little does the labor employed on the products appear here as the value of these products, as a material quality possessed by them — since now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual labor no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of the total labor. . . .

... the individual producer receives back from society — after the deductions have been made — exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labor. . . . He receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of labor (after deducting his labor for the common funds), and with this certificate he draws from the social stocks of means of consumption as much as costs the same amount of labor. The same amount of labor which he has given society in one form he receives back in another. (*Critique of the Gotha Program*, Part I, section 3.)

Clearly WP is thinking of such passages (certificates, the worker's share or "individual quantum" of social labor, the social stock of means of consumption, etc.). That they make the theoretical blunder of mistaking early communism for the transition to it is bad enough. But to imagine that Marx's description applies to the Soviet state under Stalin, or even the real but backward workers' state of Lenin (which at least tried to move toward equality), is incomprehensible.

When did Stalin's USSR ever have a planned, pre-established stock of consumer goods? When did the bureaucracy ever permit the kind of economic fairness described by Marx, without gross privileges for the rulers? Stalin made inequality of exchange a principle, in order to create a privileged layer of workers supporting the vastly more privileged bureaucracy.

The descriptive passages from Marx, regurgitated in a new form by WP, all rest on his assumption that a sufficient accumulation has already taken place so that relative abundance exists. This is key to the development of the new stage of human history, communism, but it is simply ridiculous to ascribe it to the USSR at any point in its history.

WP paints a picture of a scientifically planned economy, a gross distortion of even a theoretical workers' state in its early stages — and all the more so of Soviet reality. Moreover, if labor is no longer commodified, then the essence of the law of value has been done away with. This means, as we noted in reviewing their book, that since WP recognizes that the law of value had *not* been abolished in the workers' state of the early 1920's (they correctly described the economic task then as "the struggle against the law of value"), the logic of their line is that *Stalinism* abolished the law of value.

As any Marxist should realize, getting rid of the law of value, a monstrous horror weighing down humankind, would be an incredibly progressive act: Stalinism — as opposed to mere Leninism — would be blessing. It suggests at the very least that Stalinism in the 1930's created a higher form of workers' state than the USSR of the 1920's — an incredible position for Trotskyists, but one inherent in LRCI's theory.

## DEFENDING PREOBRAZHENSKY

To attack our view of the transitional period, Workers Power defends Evgeny Preobrazhensky, the Left Opposition economist. The review actually devotes about one-third of its twenty-two pages discussing WP's differences with us over Preobrazhensky; we will return to him in the second part of our reply. Most important for the debate is Preobrazhensky's "law of primitive socialist accumulation," which we said was wrongly posed on two counts.

First, accumulation is not a socialist task but a leftover capitalist task which nevertheless needs to be completed by the workers' state. Marx's analysis of a transitional period and Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution both teach that there are many such tasks that capitalism fails to fulfill in its epoch of decay. While necessary to develop the productive forces, the compulsion to accumulate also conflicts in part with socialist goals, particularly bringing the masses into the running of the state. For this, workers need higher wages and shorter working hours for all, in order to allow time for political activity.

Second, the workers' state advances the productive forces by counterposing economic planning to the blind, behind-the-back operation of the law of value. The workers' negation of the law of value is not another "law" but mass consciousness, which can only continue to develop and expand as the struggling workers' state moves toward eliminating scarcity.

Here is WP's counterposition in detail, with comments: **Daum, like Bukharin in his argument with Preobrazhensky, wrongly believes that the existence of a "law" is incompatible with conscious planning and direction of the economy. This is in effect an undialectical counterposition of freedom and necessity, as if the former is freed from any obligation to the latter. But Marx and Engels recognized that "freedom is the recognition of necessity."** (p. 151.)

When the supremely pragmatic WP waxes "dialectical," it's time to watch your wallet. The fundamental necessity that human freedom must relate to is scarcity. The law of value in modern society is what mediates scarcity. If human society wishes to have plenty for all, it cannot produce it simply because it consciously wishes to attain that goal. The very condition of scarce resources forces society to take value into account as a determinant of what is produced. So calculation of the amounts of human labor time expended in production and reproduction constrain social planning. In sum, part of the "necessity" that "freedom" (i.e., consciousness) must recognize is the law of value.

That is, the restrictions of value can be countered by genuine planning but cannot be ignored. If consciousness ignores such considerations, then material reality and its mediating laws assert themselves and determine the allocation of resources. That is why Stalinist "planning" ceased to plan.

Contrary to WP's fabricated charge, the basis of our analysis in the book and everywhere else has always been that proletarian consciousness can only develop in conjunction with the steady struggle toward the elimination of scarcity and the creation of abundance. The isolation of the revolutionary workers' state and the absence of socialist revolutions in the developed countries undermined the backward Soviet state and eventually destroyed the advanced consciousness of the proletariat, embodied in the Bolshevik party.

Of course, the idealist shoe is on the other foot. It is Workers Power which believes that the determination of value can be cast aside as a major factor in allocation of resources — or even be eliminated — while scarcity still chokes society and inhibits human freedom.

## VALUE IN THE EARLY USSR

Workers Power defends the idea of the law of primitive socialist accumulation as a replacement. They continue:

**Applied here, this boils down to a recognition that there exist definite proportionalities in the rates of accumulation between different sectors of the economy. There is in this**

sense a lawfulness about the rates and tempo of consumption and production which if not respected and acted upon can lead to breakdown in accumulation.

Again, this "lawfulness" is the law of value rearing its head, not a new law for a new social system. The rates of exchange between industry and countryside, for example, must take value into account, even if the state tampers with them to benefit industry. WP goes on:

**The Left Opposition's program, for example on housing and industrialization, included the use of unequal exchange with the countryside and, where possible, on the world market. To enable the state to do this it was necessary to alter the structure of the economy, to go further**

Making industrial prices conform closer to world prices is in fact recognizing the law of value. Again, the law of value is the "necessity" that consciousness has to recognize. Why should the state bother to cope with prices if physical resources were the only reality that planning had to bow to?

In fact, it is not necessary to accept this obvious interpretation as an answer to WP. Trotsky, with whom they claim to identify in respect to the law of primitive socialist accumulation and the denigration of value, explicitly made the same point in relation to value. In a crucial essay on the subject, Trotsky states:

**The monopoly of foreign trade can only moderate and regulate the external pressure of the law of value to the extent**



*Lenin in Red Square, 1919. Bolsheviks knew proletarian consciousness was decisive for revolution.*

than the nationalization and the monopoly of foreign trade already established, and institute a planned distribution of resources.

Within this framework the state could shift its resources unrestricted by the law of value. What it could not do was shift them any way it pleased. It had to recognize the physical scale of resources; it had to maintain an appropriate relationship between "Department One" and "Department Two."

Thus WP tries to salvage its position by asserting that what the state had to consider was not value but the "physical scale of resources": it had to calculate in physical, not monetary or labor terms. Of course: a certain amount of steel is needed to build a given machine in any economy. But value had to be taken into account over and above the demands of physical resources. Here, for example, is what the Platform of the Opposition said on prices:

**The necessary acceleration of industrialization is impossible without a systematic and determined lowering of production costs and of wholesale and retail prices on industrial goods, bringing them closer to world prices.**

that the value of Soviet products, from year to year, comes closer to the value of the products on the world market. In calculating the value of Soviet products one should of course take into account the overhead expenses of social legislation. But in the context of world competition between economic systems, the requirement mentioned above remains in full force — that is, the rate of Soviet industrialization must be such as to assure that Soviet products approximate those on the world market in a way perceptible to our workers and peasants. ("Notes on Economic Questions," in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926-27), p. 58.)

And so Trotsky answers WP. Interestingly, they quote Trotsky from the previous page of the same essay in their review (in order to claim that Trotsky accepted Preobrazhensky's "law": see below) — yet they still manage to ignore this telling passage that destroys their interpretation.

In sum, WP's defense of Preobrazhensky's "law" fails to disguise the fact that the Soviet state faced the demands of value and could not possibly "shift its resources unrestricted by the law of value." It could shift some resources and funds

against the requirements of value, as the Opposition proposed, but hardly unrestricted by it.

### PREOBRAZHENSKY AND TROTSKY

Preobrazhensky became one of the early capitulators to Stalin. As our book notes, in welcoming Stalin's superindustrialization of the late 1920's, he said it was what the Left Opposition had been fighting for — while Trotsky bitterly observed that Stalinist "planning" lowered the living standard of the workers instead of raising it. Preobrazhensky's transmutation of consciousness into an objective law was a sign of his cynicism toward the proletariat's revolutionary capacity.

Workers Power has good reason to defend this model. Preobrazhensky is important to them because, in citing his credentials as the economic guide for Trotsky and the Left Opposition, they give an otherwise untenable legitimacy to their own views on revolution and proletarian consciousness.

Their review asserts that our attack on Preobrazhensky is really a covert assault on Trotsky, whom they claim fully agreed with him except for one side point. They quote Trotsky as endorsing the law of socialist accumulation, later noting that Trotsky criticized Preobrazhensky for attempting to build a mathematical model of the economy abstracted from political and social relations. According to WP, Trotsky indicated "that such work would be taken over by the Socialism in One Country theorists."

But that was not their only difference. Although Trotsky in the mid-1920's formally accepted Preobrazhensky's "law," he always stressed the weight of the value problem internally and externally. Further, he specifically located the danger in Preobrazhensky's approach not just in a mathematical model

but in the very method he employed. WP neatly clips its quote just before Trotsky demonstrates both his awareness of the value problem and his real reservation about Preobrazhensky's methodology:

**The analysis of our economy from the point of view of the interaction (both conflicting and harmonizing) between the law of value and the law of socialist accumulation is in principle an extremely fruitful approach, more accurately, the only correct one.**

Here WP breaks off, but Trotsky goes on:

**Such analysis must begin within the framework of the closed-in Soviet economy. But now there is a growing danger that this methodological approach will be turned into a finished economic perspective envisaging the "development of socialism in one country." There is reason to expect, and fear, that the supporters of this philosophy, who have based themselves up to now on a wrongly understood quotation from Lenin, will try to adapt Preobrazhensky's analysis by turning a methodological approach into a generalization for a quasi-autonomous process. It is essential, at all costs, to head off this kind of plagiarism and falsification." (*Ibid.*, p. 57.)**

Trotsky cites two dangers in Preobrazhensky's "methodological approach." First, if it doesn't go on to place the Soviet Union's economic problems in the context of the world market, it will be turned into grist for Stalin's nationalist mill. Second, it will be made into a generalization as opposed to an "approach" and thereby into "a quasi-autonomous process."

Although in 1926 Trotsky didn't see Preobrazhensky himself as championing the nationalist and fatalist dangers of his own methodology, he soon learned better. Even before capitulating to Stalin in 1929, Preobrazhensky was an opponent of permanent revolution and an ally whom Trotsky always considered a vacillator on the decisive political questions at issue with Stalin. Writing in 1929, Trotsky pointed out that Preobrazhensky had maintained "a conciliationist attitude toward nationalistic socialism." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, p. 115.) Further, he pointed out "the feeling of shame" he had in 1928 with respect to Preobrazhensky's defeatist predictions over the revolutionary potential of the Chinese proletariat. (*Ibid.*, pp. 207-8.)

Trotsky learned quickly that Preobrazhensky was not just a vacillator but that he embodied the dangers the Left Opposition was fighting. When Trotsky accepted the law of socialist accumulation he obviously saw it more as a tool of analysis than as an immanent law; insofar as he did accept it as such, he was in our opinion wrong. Later, in his major works analyzing the Soviet economy in the 1930's, Trotsky ceased to use the law of primitive socialist accumulation in any way.

Since he often pointed out that the workers' state and its degeneration were utterly new experiences for humanity and that much about them was not understood, it is no accident that he corrected and re-corrected his analysis as the situation changed. Luckily he learned more than his epigones, who decades afterwards have nothing better to do than to chew on his discarded bubble gum.

Stalin's breakneck turn, from slow-paced industrial development of the New Economic Policy to the superindustrialization of the "third period" in the late 1920's, was not predicted by Trotsky and took the Left Opposition by surprise. It became obvious that Preobrazhensky had blocked with Trotsky because he had favored speedier national accumulation than Stalin before the turn, not because he was

## REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

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### VICTOR SERGE: The Century of the Unexpected — Essays on Revolution and Counterrevolution

Victor Serge is probably best known for his literary work, the novels in which he depicts revolutionary Russia and the rise of counterrevolutionary Stalinism. But he was also the author of works of political commentary and analysis, as well as being one of the great revolutionary journalists of our century. This issue of *Revolutionary History* introduces to an English-speaking readership three of Serge's major essays: "Lenin in 1917" (written in 1924), "The Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution" (1927) and "Planned Economies and Democracy" (1944). It also includes articles on Serge by Julián Gorkin, Richard Greeman and Ernest Rogers.

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a proletarian internationalist. He found his home in the Stalinist nationalist development of the third period.

Preobrazhensky's vantage point and method did not transcend the narrowness of the Russian economy. Therefore the obvious dominance of value in the encircling capitalist world could not have a decisive meaning for him. It is no wonder he embraced Stalin's autarkic nationalism.

Trotsky, the ever-vigilant opponent of the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country," knew that world proletarian revolution was the decisive necessity if the Soviet Union was to survive as a workers' state. Rapid industrialization was vital for the USSR to stay alive. However, even this was impossible without dealing with the world market and its value considerations. Workers Power finds Preobrazhensky's methodology appealing because it too sees the development of "socialism" in nationalist terms. However, that is not the only reason they are drawn to him, as we shall see when we further examine their case against us.

### THE WORKERS' STATE IN THE CAPITALIST ERA

Despite their underlying assumption that capitalism's laws are laws of exchange and distribution, not production, Workers Power accuses us of making such an error in analyzing the workers' state.

**For Daum the workers' state is, fundamentally, a benevolent capitalism. The economic laws of the society are those of value, but the state nonetheless "struggles against the law of value" by raising the cultural level of the workers, shortening the working day in keeping with increased productivity. This reduces the proletarian character of the workers' state to directing the distributional outcomes of the labor process, diverting some of it towards cultural and socially progressive undertakings. (p. 152.)**

No. What we actually said, in the book and everywhere else, is that the workers' state must carry out capitalist tasks of accumulation if it is to re-direct distribution and advance cultural and social undertakings. It will be able to overcome the law of value insofar as it succeeds in accumulating, in the context of world revolution.

Marx stressed that no social system departs the face of the Earth without carrying out its full potential for advancing the productive forces. The decadent epoch of capitalism that we live in began, according to Lenin, when capitalism became a fetter on production. By its own bestial means it has built up both a social organization of production and a technology which have the potential to create abundance, for the first time in human history. However, the actual production of plenty would put an end to value, surplus value and profit. This capitalism cannot do, marking it as a reactionary system.

The proletariat has no interest in restricting the production of abundance. It alone can carry out the capitalist task that the now-reactionary bourgeoisie cannot. A workers' state undertakes the process of turning capitalism into its opposite.

Trotsky bitterly attacked Stalin's notion that the socialist revolution of 1917 had produced a socialist society. Instead, it created republics that were socialist in intention but not yet in reality. Trotsky even polemicized against the idea of a "proletarian culture" — as opposed to capitalist culture or the future communist culture. He insisted that the period of working-class rule was not a new *society*.

As our book explains, Marx and Lenin both pointed out that a workers' state has to be regarded as part of the capitalist stage of history, although it is of course ruled by the working class and dedicated to *eradicating* the remnants of

capitalism. This understanding is fundamental to Marxism. Elaborating it was a central reason for Lenin's writing *State and Revolution*, since reformism had buried the idea.

The proletariat is a capitalistic class, in the sense that it is part of the capitalist stage of human history. Earlier societies like ancient slavery, feudalism and despotism had toiling classes but not the working class. The proletariat only exists as part of a social relationship, a relationship of exploitation, with the capitalist class. A world which contains one of these reciprocals must contain the other.

### WHAT MAKES A STATE PROLETARIAN?

The workers' state (or the dictatorship of the proletariat) is still a part of the capitalist era until it overcomes scarcity and therefore the domination of the law of value. It gears production more and more toward the needs of humanity rather than capitalism's rules of value (including the profit needs of individual subdivisions of capital). Thus it creates a society where everyone works less and gets more — in the end, even the vestige of labor power as a commodity disappears. This vestige (what Marx referred to as "bourgeois right") doesn't even disappear until humanity is well into the next stage of human history, communism.

The fundamental classes in capitalist society are two: capitalists and workers. The capitalist class needs to keep the proletariat in existence in order to keep exploiting it. The working class is interested in ending its existence as a class, that is, to end exploitation. Therefore, when the proletariat seizes state power and statifies property it is moving to create abundance and end exploitation, that is, end all class differences. That is what drives the workers' state.

The middle classes (really strata rather than classes directly related to the means of production) have illusions in their own power. This is especially true for the bureaucratic intelligentsia that flourishes in this epoch as capitalism's substitute for conscious control and planning by the workers over the state and the economy. When this layer is radicalized, it develops notions of a third way, a society modelled in the image of its own imagination, a society it mistakenly believes it has the power to create.

When radical intellectuals finally realize that they cannot make the revolution, they embrace another class in society to use as a battering ram — sometimes peasants, sometimes workers. Reformists and pseudo-revolutionaries often embrace "Marxism" and speak in the name of the proletariat, but what they have in mind (sincerely or insincerely) is a society run and planned by "socially conscious" and "well-meaning" people like themselves, not the actual toilers. They describe their "third way" variously as "workers' states," "socialist states," "peoples' democracies" or what have you.

It is no wonder that the "workers' state" as understood by WP resembles an actual workers' state only in forms. Even in their own description of what they think it is they are forced to conclude that it is neither capitalist nor socialist/communist. It is indeed only another illusory third way.

To the extent possible, a workers' state tries to operate within the dictates of the law of value in such a way as to finally eliminate it. The idea of a workers' state's "struggle against the law of value" was first used by us in 1976 (*Socialist Voice* No. 2). WP borrowed it in their book, as noted above. Now they mock it. But how else do they think genuine proletarian planning can occur?

Our book, in fact, says a lot more about what this struggle means, beyond what WP cites — above all "bringing the

masses into the running of the state" (p. 148). Even though the WP review quotes almost all of this page of the book, they leave out this significant detail. A convenient omission for people who accuse us of "reducing the proletarian character of the workers' state" to distribution!

What WP cannot stomach is our analysis that the proletarian character of the workers' state rests on political power:

**Basing his argument on the idea that all forms of the transitional society are "phases of capitalism," Daum undermines the case for seeing a "social counterrevolution" in the late 1930's. Why is such a counterrevolution necessary if the degenerated workers' state is itself a form of capitalism? To cover up this inconsistency, Daum reduces the proletarian content of the workers' state to its political form of rule. (p. 153.)**

The only inconsistency is that they say on one page that we define a workers' state via economic distribution, and on the next that we reduce it to political rule. In the course of this waffle, WP in effect denies that workers' power has anything to do with a workers' state (thereby mocking their own name!). In fact, the counterrevolution was needed by capital and the bureaucratic rulers precisely to do away with the last remnants of proletarian power.

Of course, it is not the "political form of rule" (as WP charges) that is decisive for a workers' state; workers' power can take all kinds of forms — and did, from soviets, "war communism" and the NEP to Stalinism. We never argue from pure forms; the workers' rule can degenerate to the point of disappearing entirely while the workers' state remains for a historical moment — until it is concretely supplanted in power by another social class. The key is whether the workers rule in any form at all.

Then WP accuses us of saying that the class character of

a regime is determined by the subjective will of its rulers:

**If there is nothing "socialist" about planning, state ownership and the state monopoly of foreign trade, then only the political consciousness of the ruling stratum characterizes the class nature of the state.**

First of all, we called these achievements "proletarian property forms" from the beginning: they are *necessary* steps toward socialism. We also predicted that in capitalist hands, bourgeois or bureaucratic, they decay — and decay they did. So there is something socialist in these forms, but the forms do not alone prove proletarian content. As for the consciousness of the rulers, if it were a matter of pure will the bureaucracy would have disposed of the Soviet workers' state well before it did. It took a long, bloody fight. That's why it lasted until the late 1930's. Before that, proletarian power was bent but not broken.

Actually, WP is playing with words. If the working class seizes state power and delays nationalization, planning and other proletarian forms for a period of time (as it did in 1917), the state is still a dictatorship of the proletariat. If the working class is actually in power and has destroyed the bourgeois grip on the state, is it not the ruling class? Is that an objective condition? Obviously. Must it at the same time be a question of "will" — that is "consciousness"? Yes, Marxists know that only a conscious working class can take state power and maintain it.

Communists do not downplay subjective class consciousness as a decisive factor from an objectivist point of view; WP does. In fact, socialist revolution is a demonstration in practice that the subjective consciousness of decisive sections of the working class has meshed with the objective reality of social relations. Objectively speaking, you cannot have a successful revolution otherwise. [To be continued.]

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## Report

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*continued from page 2*

private hospital workers), who is a vice-president of the state Democratic Party; and Jim Butler, head of a section of public hospital workers.

One example: at a public forum to save Harlem Hospital last fall, the ISO sponsors chose to say not a word of criticism of their guest on the platform, Jim Butler, despite his long history of opposing mass rank and file mobilization and a citywide fightback, often covered by militant rhetoric. The ISO, as usual serving the bureaucrats' interest, tried to keep LRPers out of the meeting (along with others they suspected of harboring criticisms). We nevertheless made a successful intervention on the need for a real working-class fightback and a general strike. To the ISO's great embarrassment, we linked the need for such action to the need for socialist revolution and the revolutionary party.

### CHICAGO LRP

Our Chicago group continues to focus its activity around the pivotal labor struggles in Decatur, Illinois. The next *PR* should feature a summary of the lessons from these struggles.

In November, we attended a protest rally outside the police station in Rogers Park, organized by a multiracial group of youth and parents enraged by the outrageous level of cop violence in this heavily immigrant, working-class

community in Chicago. The LRP-initiated chant, "Mass Defense, This is the Hour, Workers and Youth Have the Power" was drowned out by the superior numbers of the ISO, who as always shudder at any talk of revolution. Their slogan, "We Need Jobs! We Don't Need No Racist Cops" hides the facts that cops and racism are essential to the capitalist state — and that increased repression is necessary because capitalism doesn't have any jobs to give us.

Counterposed chants were again the issue in the wake of the December assault on the Massachusetts abortion clinics by a right-wing terrorist murderer, when the pseudo-Trotskyist left dominated an ad hoc mobilisation. The LRP initiated the slogan, "Fight! Take a Stand! Free Abortion on Demand!" We were joined by the Spartacist League and the Chicago Workers' Voice group (former supporters of the Marxist-Leninist Party). But Socialist Action and Solidarity combined to shout us down with the classless chant, "Our Bodies, Our Lives, Our Right to Decide." Without free abortion, the "right to decide" can hardly be experienced by most poor working-class women.

### SAVE MUMIA ABU JAMAL!

In New York and Chicago we joined rallies in support of former Black Panther Mumia Abu Jamal. In the intensified climate of racism and reaction, Jamal is facing execution on a fraudulent murder charge in Philadelphia; support for him is a duty of all working class fighters. Jamal can be contacted directly at: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E. Roy Furman Hwy., Waynesburg, PA 15370.

# Notes of a Revolutionary Transit Worker

by Eric Josephson

The League for the Revolutionary Party has been active in the struggles of the transit workers in New York City for eight years now. We have warned all along that capitalism's attacks had finally to go from chipping away at transit workers to a full frontal assault. Now our predictions are coming true, as the Metropolitan Transit Authority plans to lay off over 1500 car and station cleaners by 1996 — the first layoffs of permanent subway workers in over fifty years.

The rest of the public service unions in New York have been hit by waves of layoffs since the early 1970's. Transit workers, however, are in a strategically powerful position, and the bourgeoisie knows it. Transit strikes historically have brought profit-making to a halt by shutting down the massive subway and bus system that all businesses depend on. Thus the ruling class is more wary of attacking the Transport Workers Union — but it is doing so now.

There was a lead-up to the layoff announcement. This past summer, the leadership of TWU 100 endorsed a take-back contract that gave the bosses the green light. Under President Damaso Seda, they drew up a contract based on what management wanted — and lied about it to the membership in order to cover up their dramatic concessions. One demand was an unprecedented work change, one-person train operation (OPTO), that would eliminate conductors and make every ride unsafe. Nevertheless, the bureaucrats' contract provides for a "blue-ribbon panel" to meet in the summer of 1995 and render a binding decision on OPTO. The contract also contains significant economic concessions.

They have also continued to weaken the 1994 contract after ratification and have made secret agreements, recently exposed, abrogating parts of it. Specifically, they agreed to have OPTO installed before the panel meets, and to reduce the next two contractual wage raises. This is supposedly to make up a shortfall in the retirees' health fund from the most recent pension "reform" — which raised worker contributions, but not enough for the insurance industry.

Most of the leadership's lies didn't come out until after the Local 100 elections, months after the contract ratification. In the elections, the long-time opposition slate, New Directions won 43 percent of the overall vote, up from less than 30 percent in 1991. They and allied slates won or regained majorities in several divisions. The stacking of the Local Executive Board with ten at-large positions, however, means that ND holds only 15 out of 45 seats, up from 9 last time.

The LRP did not vote for New Directions or its allies, since they offered no real alternative to the Seda gang. ND nominally opposed the contract but did not even pretend to organize against it. As usual when faced with a rotten contract, they passed out leaflets saying that it didn't "really meet the membership's needs" and that we should consider fighting by various means — "including a strike, if necessary."

ND is a loose confederation of reformists, fake socialists, liberals and just plain personal opportunists, all held together by supporters of the ever-more-right-moving "Solidarity Socialist Organization." ND had no desire to lead a contract fight because they know that would mean a strike. In actuality they ceded control of the situation to the Seda leadership, hoping that the latter would look bad enough to let ND pick up some votes — which is what happened.

What ND really worked hard on was a lawsuit against

Local 100 over the attempted bureaucratic exclusion of ND and many other Local members from the union hall during the 1991-92 contract fight; the leadership had called the cops on transit workers and physically threatened ND leaders, who were momentarily riding a wave of militant opposition. This lawsuit is an attack on the working class despite its seemingly democratic character, because it encourages the capitalist state to deepen its control over union affairs.

Since the election, the federal, state and city governments have launched unprecedented attacks on transit workers with the help of their faithful servants in the Local leadership. Taking effect in January 1995 is the Federal law mandating the random drug and alcohol testing of most freight and passenger transport workers in the U.S. Already several New York transit workers have been fired or suspended for failing to produce 0.45 milliliters of urine for testing within two hours! The Local leadership did their bit to bring this on when they called for increased drug screening in response to a big subway crash in 1991.

To the bureaucrats' treason, ND counterposes only anti-union lawsuits, speeches about union democracy and more effective implementation of the grieve-and-arbitrate approach that got us into this mess in the first place. Now that transit workers face layoffs at the same time as thousands of city, health care and other workers, a general strike would be an elementary act of self-defense. But ND and their ilk disparage any such notion as much as the entrenched bureaucracy. Perhaps they fear that a massive struggle could revolutionize the unions' business as usual. In this, they're right. ●

## **Capitalist Injustice: James Frazier Convicted**

On February 24 a Brooklyn criminal court jury found transit worker James Frazier guilty of illegal possession of a weapon in the third degree (punishable by 1 to 5 years in prison), acquitting him of the greater charge of illegal weapons possession in the second degree.

Fellow workers and others who supported Frazier were shocked and appalled at this gross injustice. Despite the obvious lies and inconsistencies of the police, and overwhelming evidence that they had planted a gun on Frazier (after shooting him in the head!), the capitalist "justice" system again favored the cops.

James Frazier is a young Black probationary trackworker (the bosses fired him right after the shooting) who was driving his Audi in Brooklyn early one morning in October 1993, when a cop's bullet struck him from behind without provocation or warning. (See PR 47 for more background.)

Although the cop who shot him is herself Black, the attack is typical of racist cop attacks on young Black men. The cops assume that young Blacks are car thieves, dope dealers or otherwise up to no good. Ironically, Frazier, a steady worker since his mid-teens with no arrest record, had previously passed the police hiring test. But he was in the wrong place at the wrong time in the wrong car.

The fight for justice for James Frazier will continue. His sentencing is scheduled for April 6. He has a civil case pending against the Police Department for damages and continues to fight to get his job back. If you can join in support activities, please contact us. *Justice for James Frazier!*

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## Right Turn

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*continued from page 1*

these workers, whom they viciously exploit in their homelands and then again when they are forced to come here.

These attacks are like a carpet bombing raid on the working class and will inflict massive social devastation. Already the urban ghettos suffer depression levels of unemployment, poverty and homelessness. Preventable diseases spread as medical services decay; youth can't get an education in the rotting schools and colleges — in desperation, many turn to crime or drugs. Since the new cutbacks will astronomically increase all of these blights, they amount to a death penalty — for thousands. The ferocious cutbacks' most lasting effect will be to kill the future for working-class youth.

### KEY QUESTIONS FOR REVOLUTIONARIES

Many working people see the need to resist the assault but do not know how, since all the present-day leaders of the labor and minority organizations — and their politician friends — offer only business as usual. However, a small but growing number of young workers — mainly Black and Latin at this time — already know that it is capitalism that is their enemy. They see the need for a massive rebellion to halt the attacks. They are searching for the way to a new world free from misery and want.

Such future revolutionaries must ask themselves four key questions: 1) What is behind these attacks — just greed, meanness and racism, or something even more fundamental to the capitalist system? 2) How can the victims of this system — the workers and poor — fight back against the attacks? 3) Is there an alternative to this society of ever-increasing exploitation, poverty and oppression? And 4) What should we do right now?

This article will outline the proletarian answer to these questions. We will show how revolutionary-minded workers and youth can find the answers they are looking for only in authentic Marxism — the scientific class understanding of society. Marxism stands alone in pointing out that only through revolutionary class struggle can workers defend their living and working conditions. And that this struggle also prepares workers to be the makers of history in building a classless, truly human society of abundance and peace.

This class-struggle strategy is the opposite of the dead-end "populist" line. In either its right or left guise, populism proclaims the need for "the common man" or "the poor" to fight "the rich" — rather than for the working class to fight the capitalist class. This line is meant to tell the masses that if a few bad rich people are pressured aside, they can rise economically without a social upheaval — and that there are good rich people who will side with them. It plays into the hands of the Democratic Party and doesn't challenge capitalism. It has always been a lie, and today it is all the more so.

### BEHIND THE CAPITALIST ATTACK

The ruling class needs a full-scale attack on the rights, working and living conditions of the working class because, under the surface glitter, the world capitalist system is being torn apart by its own mortal contradictions. Occasionally the bourgeoisie stops beating its chest over the supposed wonders of the free market and admits the underlying crisis. Take the recent Mexican financial panic; here is how *Business Week*

magazine (Feb. 13) described the danger to capital from the Mexican "meltdown":

Even by historical standards, Mexico's currency collapse ranks among the scariest. With the crisis stretching into its seventh week, investors were stampeding. Worse yet, the panic was stretching from Buenos Aires to Budapest. Even the dollar was taking an unexpected shellacking. Some were bracing for another 1987 crash — not just in Mexico City, but in New York, London, and Tokyo.

Indeed, Mexico was only the tip of the iceberg. Clinton had to save Mexican banking from a collapse that threatened to overwhelm world financial markets. The urgency in the business press was fully believable, given the precariousness of a world financial structure built on fictitious capital. The free fall of the U.S. dollar a few weeks later proves the point.

While they hoped that the bailout would temporarily stabilize the financial markets as the Mexican crisis continued, the bourgeoisie demanded further action. For a more lasting stability they need a strong government in Mexico committed to intensifying exploitation and crushing potential resistance from the workers and peasants. In a widely leaked memo, a Chase Bank adviser called on President Zedillo to militarily "eliminate" the Zapatista peasants in Chiapas. Wall Street wants assurance that the government can "demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and of security policy."

Only a few weeks later, the British bourgeois journal *The Economist* (March 4) revealed the seriousness of the Barings bank collapse at the same time that it tried to downplay it:

Is it preposterous to compare a bank with a nuclear reactor? ... Barings blew up nothing much except itself. Apart from some peripheral damage, this private tragedy left the world's financial system pretty much unchanged. What, though, if it had not been Barings, but a bank ten times its size? Or a bank in which millions of citizens had stored their savings? That could arguably create a "systemic" threat to the financial system ... As the United States discovered in the 1930's, this is easily the economic equivalent of a nuclear explosion.

Mexico is a sign of the times internationally — in its economic collapse, its exposure of the fragility of the world finance system and the capitalists' response of calling for more repression and exploitation. World capitalism is heading towards a crisis that will dwarf in intensity and swiftness the 1930's period of collapse and depression.

### CAPITALIST DECAY LEADS TO CRISIS

How has capitalism — the wealthiest form of society in human history, only recently triumphant over its long-term rival in the Cold War — come to face such a crisis? We summarize here the history and analysis that is explained in detail in our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory*.

After a quarter-century of boom following World War II, world capitalism has undergone two decades of falling profits. Profits inflated after the war because of a series of massive working-class defeats: the Great Depression, the victory of fascism in Italy, Germany, Spain and elsewhere, the Stalinist overthrow of the Russian workers' state in the late 1930's and its continued counterrevolutionary role around the world, the slaughter of millions of workers and peasants in the war itself — and finally the defeat of revolutionary proletarian and nationalist movements in the war's aftermath.

The boom was extended in the imperialist countries by

large-scale state intervention, aimed at preventing a depression that could have triggered a mass response by the revived working classes. It ended in 1969-73, brought down by the costs of gains won by the working class and of propping up obsolete capital. As well, the growing strength of the U.S.'s imperialist rivals in Europe and Japan made even greater demands on available surplus-value worldwide. This extended the cyclical decline of the rate of profit — but the anti-depression measures continued: a vast expansion of credit in the 1970's, the record U.S. budget deficits of the 1980's.

As the Communist Organization for the Fourth International wrote last year in our *International Perspectives* document:

**The world economy is burdened with an immense build-up of fictitious capital. The relation between the two dominant forms of capital, industry and finance, is seriously out of balance. These factors promote great instability, which will make the inevitable coming depression all the more virulent — as well as increasingly vicious attacks against all layers of the working class.**

Thus today, the same forces that led to the massive poverty and bloody slaughters of the 1930's and 40's are again dominant — forces generated by the system itself. Capitalism is periodically thrown into convulsions of cyclical economic crisis spurred by the overproduction of goods: when the anarchic system of production for market competition produces too much to sell at a profit, factories are shut and jobs are wiped out, while the overproduced products, desperately needed by working people, are destroyed or left to rot on shelves because they cannot be paid for.

Beyond the cyclical crises, capitalism in this century entered its epoch of decay, in which any advance of the productive forces in one sphere comes at the expense of another. For example: the introduction of new technology, which has the potential to liberate the working class from its back-breaking and mind-numbing labor, no longer reduces the working day (the 40-hour week was won in the U.S. before World War II but has been eroded since). Another: the enormous advances in chemical and nuclear technology have also produced immense amounts of waste products that threaten the human environment on every side.

Today, unable to advance the productive forces qualitatively for fear of unleashing revolution, capitalism turns parasitical; unable to tolerate a lasting increase in jobs, it multiplies the levels of mass unemployment; unable to expand the real (as opposed to paper) economy, it teeters on the edge of trade wars and then world war for the redivision of the world's resources. To save their system, the capitalists turn on the working class and strive to intensify exploitation. Fearful of the coming deluge, they seek to gorge themselves at the expense of those who really create the wealth.

In sum, capitalism has organized an entire international economy with the single aim of amassing profits for its national ruling classes. In doing so, it has unintentionally laid the basis for its own overthrow. By building an integrated world economy with a huge productive potential, capitalism has made it possible to eradicate the scarcity on which class society is based — and to create a society of abundance, a socialist society.

World capitalism's current slide into the abyss was violently announced by the collapse of the Stalinist econ-

omies of Russia and Eastern Europe. Statified capitalism was more vulnerable to capitalism's crisis than the "free market" capitalism of the West. Now the same crisis that tore down Stalinism is ripping apart Western Europe, provoking the collapse of imperialized economies like Mexico and calling into question the global domination of the U.S. ruling class.

U.S. capitalism has managed to maintain greater stability



March 1: 30,000 New York workers protest Gov. Pataki's threatened Medicaid cuts.

than any other economy by bleeding dry the imperialized "third world" and successfully intensifying the exploitation of workers at home. But U.S. capitalism is profoundly vulnerable. The billions of dollars tied up in the stocks and bonds of U.S. finance are bets on future profits. The market value of these investments continues to grow, even though the productive base of the economy is shrinking and will never supply the profits hoped for.

Financial markets threaten to collapse as soon as the capitalists realize that their investments will never be paid back, just as the stock markets collapsed in the 1930's, triggering world depression. This danger lies behind the banks' demands for huge repayments on loans and bonds from federal, state and city governments. Yes, the billions of dollars being cut from social security, education and health care for the working class is going straight in the hands of Wall Street bankers and stock brokers.

Similarly, the current shallow upturn in U.S. industry is partly due to bosses' intensified exploitation, but mostly to the low value of the U.S. dollar — which makes U.S. exports artificially competitive on the world market. American industrialists know this, and are looking for the opportunity to attack the industrial working class and intensify exploitation.

#### CLINTON ATTACKS PREPARE ...

All the pressure for squeezing more profits out of the workers at home has been felt by the ruling class for some time, but until recently the bourgeoisie hesitated to launch a full-scale attack, to avoid triggering a mass response. The Los Angeles riot of 1992, a working-class outburst against injustice and poverty, had convinced the ruling class to back away from the repressive line promoted by George Bush. They worried that the government would provoke further rebellions. So they moved to get rid of Bush and turned to

Clinton in the 1992 elections.

In Clinton the ruling class hoped to find a populist who could calm the seething anger of the masses by acting as an inclusive "healer," holding together the class and racial rifts while continuing to cut government spending on the working class and poor and supporting the bosses' drive for deeper exploitation. He would play "soft cop" to the Republicans' "hard cop." The strategy succeeded: the Clinton Administration attacked welfare, maintained mass unemployment, increased spending only on cops, jails and big business, and blamed the country's woes on crime, welfare and immigrants.

The key to Clinton's success was the continued support given him by the pro-capitalist leaders of every major organization claiming to speak for the workers or oppressed sectors — from the unions' Lane Kirkland to Black Democrat Jesse Jackson. All these misleaders have sought to enforce "reasonableness" on the working class, allowing the rulers to step up their war against us. More fearful of the potential for explosive struggles from below than of the capitalist attacks, they refuse to lift a finger to help the masses fight either Clinton's budget cuts or the Republican-led attacks.

### ... THE REPUBLICAN "REVOLUTION"

As attacks on the working class mounted without any organized defense, the capitalists gained confidence that they could redouble their assault. Two developments in particular emboldened the ruling class.

One was the sharp turn to the right by the "moderate" Republican governor of California, Pete Wilson, in the wake of the Los Angeles riots. Wilson enforced a brutal austerity budget, slashing services from welfare to higher education, as union leaders sold out any struggle against it. Then he spearheaded the racist campaigns for Proposition 187 against Latino immigrants and the "three strikes and you're out" laws aimed at minority youth.

Two, New York's Black Mayor Dinkins was ousted by Republican Rudy Giuliani in 1993 in a thinly veiled racist campaign. When Giuliani pushed through an austerity budget steeper than Dinkins' without any organized opposition, the bourgeoisie concluded that fear of working-class explosion was unfounded.

These attacks drew blood without serious resistance and invited the new mauling by the reactionary sharks. In the face of mass opposition, the bourgeoisie is still capable of retreating to a softer-cop strategy. However, now or in the near future, an all-out onslaught is necessary to save the system.

For all the confidence of the capitalists got as a result of the restrained response of the workers and oppressed minorities, the Republican sweep of Congress demonstrates the

tremendous instability of U.S. capitalism. It reflects a radical polarization of society that points to coming upheavals. Under the impact of the economic crisis, sections of the mostly white labor-aristocratic skilled professional workers and petty-bourgeois small business people are becoming more and more desperate. Seeing a threat to their livelihoods, they look for answers — and enemies. Right-wing populism supplies phony scapegoat solutions.

### WORKING-CLASS EXPLOSIONS INEVITABLE

Because of what they currently see as their stake in capitalist society and the seeming lack of any other way out of their dilemma, this middle layer provides the voting base of support for section of the big capitalists in the Republican Party. "Big government" and "special interests" that soak the "common man" are the alleged targets, but for the bourgeois politicians leading the attack, the whole working class is the real prey. Concessions given to the enraged petty bourgeoisie and labor aristocracy are more rhetorical than real. However, that the Republicans speak of their assault as a revolution reflects the extreme but reactionary form being taken by the radicalization of elements of the middle strata. The "revolution" — more accurately, counterrevolution — is still contained within electoral bounds.

Overshadowed for the moment by the rightward radicalization of large sections of the white middle class, the far larger mass of workers and poor of all colors are inexorably being pushed toward a far more explosive radicalization to the left. Revolutionary-minded workers and students have wondered whether the working class will ever rise up, given the mood of hopelessness that hangs over workplaces and neighborhoods. But mixed with the misery, depression and cynicism among the mass of working-class people is a deep rejection of this society and rage against it, particularly among the youth. In the cities an explosion is waiting to happen. A strong fight against the current attacks by just one segment of the working class has the potential to spark a wildfire of struggle.

And this explosion is inevitable. With wages being cut, mass unemployment looming and every knot of the social safety net being untied, the masses have no choice. In reversing decades of working-class gains, the bourgeoisie is also undermining decades of social measures designed to buy off sections of the working class and thereby undermine struggles. For example, Medicare and Social Security have previously been treated as political sacred cows because they were relied upon by the "middle class" as well as poorer layers of workers. Now these benefits are targeted — along with Medicaid, commonly denigrated as for poor people only.

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More and more, the politicians are promoting racism to encourage better-off workers to hold on to illusions of superiority over the rest of the class — based on being white or American-born or the like. But the economic attack could detonate a united response.” Columnist Bob Herbert warned New York politicians of the risk in slashing public services:

**Mr. Pataki and his jubilant sidekicks in Albany seem not to understand that their mindlessly destructive behavior will result in a more than just a wholesale increase in suffering. It will also create the utterly degraded environment in which enormous numbers of poor people, who already know that they are despised, will come to realize that they have absolutely nothing left to lose. While the legislators are yukking it up, more and more people will be consigned to the streets with no jobs, no money, no benefits and no friends. Their rage will be like nothing we've previously seen. (New York Times, Feb. 4.)**

We have already seen a preview of what this anger can do in the Los Angeles upheaval. There, the daily conditions of exploitation and terror, enforced by brutal racism and repression, had built up such rage and frustration that one spark set the city ablaze. The riot has since been described by the ruling class as an orgy of violence by gang members and drug addicts. But in reality, while it was initiated by young Blacks, it quickly attracted masses of Latinos and even whites. It was an expression of working-class fury at the system which oppresses and exploits them. (See “Los Angeles: Racism and Revolution” in *PR* 44.)

We cannot say what particular incidents will spark the coming working-class rebellions. We cannot even predict with assurance which sector of the working class will take the initial step. It might start with a community riot; it might occur as a result of an industrial confrontation.

Revolts across the world have been initiated by students. Today, working-class students are particularly under fire. That their actions usually carried out with energy and enthusiasm — as well as the fact that many of them are workers themselves — could ignite wider layers. Given the combined attacks on public sector workers in New York and other cities right now, a likely place for explosive struggles is those industries where union workers are drawn from the racially oppressed and provide services on which working-class communities desperately depend. That is the case with the hospital workers in New York City right now. A serious outbreak there could draw in immediate support from other angry Black and Latino workers.

#### **SOCIALIST REVOLUTION: THE ONLY SOLUTION**

However, wherever the struggles start, it will be the task of revolutionary workers to guide others on the road to class consciousness: an interracialist and internationalist understanding that the central task is the overthrow of capitalism.

Since the L.A. riots there has been a hell of a lot of mass anger against the attacks but only isolated acts of resis-

tance. This criminal restraint is due to the bureaucrats who have run the unions into the ground and to the professional do-gooders, politicians and preachers whose middle-class organizations allegedly represent the oppressed minorities but who have completely caved in. These leaders betray the working class because they are committed to capitalism, a system which needs deeper exploitation and racism if it is to survive. Because of these betrayers, its the right wing that can talk about radical change without fear of the urban masses.

It is only a question of time before the masses explode. But if in the course of the struggle, a new revolutionary party leadership is not forged, then the betrayers will inevitably sabotage it as they always have in the past. The fightback can



*Decatur, Illinois: Sign outside Staley plant shows locked-out workers' anger at class war traitors.*

only be victorious if it comes under the leadership of the most conscious workers themselves, organized into a party openly dedicated to socialist revolution.

Of course, when the workers and the oppressed pour out onto the streets, many labor bureaucrats, middle-class do-gooders and their allies will start talking very populistically, even socialistically. Groups acting as their flacks are already doing so. But populism is only liberalism with a radical mask. For them “socialism” is always in the far future; right now they simply lie that a reformed capitalism is possible. Their real goal is to keep the mass struggle within safe bounds.

The most influential of these is the Workers World Party (WWP), a group with long experience in luring young activists into populist campaigns that end up giving backhanded support to Democrats. WWP is now initiating a “National People’s Campaign” under the slogan of “Fight the Right.” In this campaign they feature reformist spokesmen like former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and deliberately avoid any criticism of the current leaders of the labor, gay, women’s and community organizations. They say: “If all these movements can find common ground against the right, then they will be an unstoppable force.”

This seemingly reasonable plea for unity disguises the populists’ real agenda. First, the pro-capitalist leaders of the

sectors under attack have already undermined the very struggles they claim to represent. WWP, its front groups and tails like the International Socialist Organization are committed to not raising the class question in order to prevent any challenge to such leadership. "Unity" on their terms rules out the real unity necessary — that of the workers and oppressed fighting for their interests against the demands of capitalism.

Second, "unity against the right" — which WWP identifies as "Gingrich-Helms-Dole" — is a slogan for aiming the budding movement only against the Republicans. Workers World criticizes Clinton and the Democrats for not putting up a good enough alternative, not for being part of the class enemy. (If a liberal Democrat like Jesse Jackson runs for office, you can bet the WWP will be in his camp again.) Even though masses are rightfully enraged by the viciousness of the Republican-led assault, "fight the right" hides the fact that Democrats and Republicans are waging a class war — which requires *proletarian-led* unity in response.

In contrast to patronizing middle-class leftists who wish to use the working class as a bludgeon for their own interests, a genuinely proletarian communist organization believes in the ability of its own class to become conscious of its revolutionary mission. Therefore, we stress the need to tell the truth and openly fight for class independence — not manipulate the supposedly blind masses.

### THE SOCIALIST PROGRAM

Authentic communists point out from the start that the working class can free itself from the misery of capitalism only by smashing the capitalists' state power and establishing a workers' state. That means a state run by the masses of people through democratic organizations of the working class, including its most oppressed sections. The revolutionary workers would centralize control of the economy through their state and use it to scientifically plan the economy; the aim of production would be human need, not profit. In this way the workers' state would move toward a classless, communist society of abundance.

The workers' state would take immediate measures to free the working class from the burden of capitalism's crisis. In one blow, it would free the working class from massive personal and state debts — *Expropriate the Banks and Industries!* The wealth seized would immediately be put to use in a massive public works program to provide needed services like health care and education and create millions of useful jobs. All necessary work would be divided among all available workers to shorten the working day and eliminate unemployment once and for all. That's why socialist slogans include: *Jobs For All! A Full Public Works Program!* and *A Sliding Scale of Hours!*

Capitalism invented genocide. All historical experience proves that the armed capitalist state will not hand over power peacefully. Rather, the working class will have to smash the capitalist class's state power through an armed uprising and defend its rule by establishing its own armed state. Unlike every other class society, all of which have oppressed the majority of the people in the interests of the exploiting minority, the workers' state will be run by the masses of workers and poor who will themselves be armed and organized to suppress the counterrevolutionary acts of the minority, the capitalists and their supporters.

There are no national solutions for the working class. The workers are an international class, and while they must first overthrow the capitalists who rule "their" nations, the

struggle for socialism cannot succeed without the victory of workers' socialist revolutions in many countries.

### REVOLUTIONARY PARTY LEADERSHIP

Today, there is anger enough and more among the workers and the poor for the coming massive struggles against capitalism. What the working class does not have is a battle plan — an understanding of the crisis confronting it and its revolutionary tasks. This cannot come from the masses all at once. The working class will only come to understand its situation fully if its most politically advanced members come together to build the revolutionary party.

The cadres of such a leadership party would fight side by side with their fellow workers in every struggle, showing themselves as the best fighters by advocating the most effective tactics of struggle, truthfully explaining the immediate tasks and problems of the struggle and pointing to the conclusions their fellow workers must learn — the need for the socialist revolution. People learn through experience and struggle, but even this depends upon guidance by the most conscious. The workers can only form themselves into a revolutionary army if its general staff is built today.

If there were even a small revolutionary party of some hundreds of workers in the U.S. today, it could begin to effectively counter the capitalists' plans. It would use its influence to prepare wider layers to fight for the best way to resist — a *General Strike Against the Capitalist Attacks!*

A general strike would most clearly pose the struggle as class against class as opposed to "poor against rich." It would bring about the greatest unity of all workers and poor in struggle against the class enemy. By shutting down profit-making and by launching workplace occupations, it would challenge the economic privileges and property of the capitalists. And by exercising the tremendous power of the working class, it would show the masses the power they have to go forward in the struggle.

A general strike would not resemble the betrayed union strikes of recent years. It would be a massive rebellion in which the most oppressed and exploited workers would come forward as the best fighters. Unions, weak as they are, still dominate in the key heavy industries and transportation. The bureaucrats can't be avoided — they must be fought. However, such a struggle could not be confined to the unions alone but would inevitably involve layers of the workers, poor people and oppressed minorities who have never been organized before. New and more all-encompassing organizations of the dispossessed would be created, like *committees of action* and *armed self-defense guards*. A general strike would thereby unite workers of all sectors and colors, the unemployed and semi-employed with the employed — our whole class, including the most oppressed and exploited.

Most importantly, by mobilizing all the power of the masses against the capitalists, a general strike would not only be able to stop the current attacks and even snatch some further gains from the capitalists, but it would put the greatest possible pressure on the capitalist system to show whether it can solve its crisis and meet the workers' needs. By doing this, the general strike would enable the masses of workers who are not sure of the need for the revolution to test the possibility of reforming capitalism — and in that way see clearly that there is no reform solution. Socialist revolution is the only solution.

By accepting the shrinking capitalist pie and therefore the increasing competition of workers against one another for



crumbs, by trying to tie the working class to the pro-capitalist Democratic Party, the current leaders of the class are laying the basis for a fratricidal war of all against all. Already, many white workers are being set against Blacks and Latinos, U.S.-born against immigrants, private sector against state and city workers, union workers against non-union, and so on.

In contrast, the revolutionary party champions the interracial and international unity of the working class by fighting for the interests of the most oppressed and exploited, whose situation today reveals the future capitalism holds for all. Black and Latino workers are rapidly learning that the liberal-populist-reformist road to "integration" under capitalism is a vicious lie. And a real fightback quickly exposes the fact that nationalism represents no challenge to

this society and is a dead end.

In the coming revolutionary struggles, the most oppressed and exploited workers will play a disproportionately large role in the leadership, because of their fighting history and strategic location in the urban economy. Super-exploited minorities learn in struggle that this society will never give real consideration to their needs. Only by achieving a society of plenty for all can racism be crushed. And with such a program, all workers can be won to a united struggle.

There are already small numbers of revolutionary-minded young workers and students who see through both the system and the self-defeating tactics of the populists and reformists. It is crucial that they join with us in the struggle to *Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!*

## The Working Class — As It Is and As It Will Be

August 13, 1994

### To the League for the Revolutionary Party:

I subscribe to *Proletarian Revolution* in the hopes of expanding my understanding of what is "really going on" in this country of ours. I am not (yet) a person who identifies myself as a communist, a believer in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism or a socialist; however, I see the bullshit perpetrated by the capitalist system and I refuse to kowtow to the status quo and I am seeking some answers. Perhaps someone at your office could provide one or two brief ones for me.

Am I part of the proletariat? I am 22 years old, live by myself, plan to attend graduate school this fall for political science and work for UPS. I am not rich, nor are my parents, and it's a struggle for me to provide for myself now that I am on my own. Where does an employer like United Parcel Service fit into the scheme of things? I realize all I have to offer them is my labor power, but their hierarchy isn't so minutely defined that I can point at the top and say "Exploiters!" And, finally, why are so many of our fellow "Americans" like mindless sheep who would rather watch soap operas or O.J. Simpson than contemplate alternative political/social/economic systems that would benefit us all? Any answers or thoughts would be greatly appreciated. Thank you. *Tony M.*

September 20, 1994

Dear Tony,

We were pleased to receive your letter a few weeks ago, and regret that we have not been able to reply before now.

In response to your first question — am I part of the proletariat? — we can only answer based on a number of assumptions about the work you do for the UPS. The tone of your letter, and particularly your note on just how tough it is to make ends meet on your wage, suggest that you have one of the basic (proletarian) UPS jobs: mail sorting, processing, delivery or secretarial support or some similar position. We guess that any uncertainty you have over your class position comes not from "where your heart is" (you clearly want to be a working-class fighter), but from the sort of work you do, as well as the place of UPS within the capitalist system. So we will first concentrate on what UPS's position within the capitalist system means for its workers.

"EXPLOITERS!"

UPS is unlike a classic capitalist factory which clearly exploits workers' labor to produce tangible products (cars, for

example) which are then sold for a profit — the exploitation is relatively clear because the factory is a focus of production. UPS, on the other hand, acts as a distributor of goods, and has much of the appearance of a service industry rather than as a key to production. Nonetheless, UPS is definitely a capitalist enterprise which draws in wage laborers and exploits them in the capitalist way: by paying them far less than their work is worth. Moreover, UPS and other companies like it do play an essential role in the production cycle, distributing the products of companies to buyers, which is indispensable to their profit making (if products cannot make it to the market to be sold, the capitalists can't make a profit).

Of course, much of UPS's work is what Marxists would call "unproductive" in that it is not an essential part of capitalist production (tasks like the delivery of letters). But this is not at all decisive in defining the class character of UPS's workers. Indeed if all of the work performed by/for UPS was unproductive, the majority of its workers would still be proletarian: the exploitative relationship between UPS's capitalist owners and their workers is the key.

As for your difficulty in pointing to the tops of UPS and declaring "Exploiters!", we understand your frustration. We can also see at least some of the reasons why it is difficult. Most importantly, UPS's capitalist chiefs are obscured by several tens of thousands of managers and supervisors who act as the day-to-day bosses standing over UPS's roughly 100,000 workers. While these managers and supervisors act as the workplace cops, own some shares in UPS and make salaries considerably higher than the workers, they are not the chief exploiters who sit atop UPS. Rather, they act as huge buffer between the masses of UPS workers and the handful of monopoly capitalist UPS chiefs.

However, the big exploiters of UPS workers can be pointed out. While as many as 20,000 managers and supervisors can claim part ownership in UPS by their purchase of shares in the company, the decisive majority of shares are

### Letters Welcome

We invite readers of *Proletarian Revolution* to send letters to the magazine. Names will be withheld on request. Write us at: P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY. 10008.

held by a small circle of capitalists. At the top is Chief Executive Officer Kent "Oz" Nelson. He and his fellow big-wigs take home (or should I say, take back to their many homes, condos, mansions, etc.) millions of dollars each year, not to mention the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of stocks they control. These few exploiters divide between them the lion's share of UPS's annual profit of one billion dollars.

Moreover, there is particular reason to hate UPS bosses and management: they are notorious for their attempts to maximize the exploitation of every single UPS worker with speed-ups, efficiency tests and so forth. The UPS tops employ over 1,000 "efficiency experts" to time the moves of every employee down to tenths of a second, to maximize productivity. For example, according to UPS management handbooks, drivers are supposed to walk at a rate of no less than three feet per second, carry packages under the left arm, step into their van with the right foot while holding the van's key with the middle finger of the right hand!

UPS openly treats its workers like robots, as you've probably learned already. A popular saying among UPS managers is that their workers should be trained to "bleed brown!" No wonder when the magazine *New England Monthly* investigated UPS, one worker said: "It's the very best delivery system in the world, but they're the most rotten bastards to work for!"

#### FROM WORKING-CLASS SLUMBER TO REVOLUTION

And now to your last question — why is it that so many workers and poor people seem more concerned with the most trivial forms of popular culture (like soap operas), than with looking to alternatives to the misery inflicted upon us all by the capitalist system? This is a great question to ask, because it points toward the key to our whole political perspective, and how we differ from all other groups claiming to represent revolutionary Marxism.

Today, the popular consciousness of working people in this country is characterized by widespread ignorance, apathy and cynicism. If the grinding poverty, unemployment, exploitation and humiliation of life under capitalism were enough to lead the masses of workers to look to an alternative to capitalism, the whole of the working class would have turned its attention to the question long ago — in fact the working class would surely have found the solution to the question by now. But the experience of capitalism's oppression is clearly not enough to lead the masses to search for an alternative. So what is?

The working class's popular consciousness is based on its own collective experience. The current generation of workers in this country has an experience of life under capitalism that is extremely one-sided (so far). While on the one hand there is no shortage of suffering and deprivation, there is on the other hand very little experience of struggles that challenge that oppression and exploitation, and that pose even the possibility of an alternative to this rotten system. Because of the historically low ebb of class struggle in this country since the ghetto rebellions and industrial struggles of the late 1960's and early 1970's, "the system" seems to be the unchallengeable "natural order of things" — even if horrible and despised. In the absence of an alternative, so many working people lower their horizons to "just surviving" and look for some sort of "escape" — soap operas, drugs or whatever.

But this can only be a temporary state of affairs. Capitalism is not only an abhorrent system based on exploitation and repression — but it is decaying, and its intensifying crisis

will inevitably drive the working class in this country onto the road of the class struggle, as it is already doing in many parts of the world. As its profit rates fall, the capitalists are forced to attack the working class and its institutions in order to intensify their exploitation, and this will in turn force workers into defensive struggles. The struggles of significant groups of workers will show the workers involved, and many more as well, that the capitalist system can be challenged. Then more and more will turn to looking for an alternative to the wretched profit system.

#### MANY SEEK ALTERNATIVES

In this respect, the Los Angeles riots of 1992 were a sign of the times. Faced with a flagrant example of racism when the cops who beat Rodney King were first found not guilty of using "excessive force," masses of young Black and Latino working and unemployed people (and even some young whites) whose anger at poverty, exploitation and racist oppression had built up for so long, exploded in struggle (see our coverage in "Los Angeles — Racism and Revolution," *Proletarian Revolution* #44.)

In response to the riots, a small layer of mostly young working people across the country were radicalized, and turned to questioning the system and looking for a way to fight it. Most were trying to understand the relationship between what they saw as the two outstanding features of "the system:" the struggle of rich versus poor on the one hand, and racist oppression on the other. They saw the need for a mass struggle against all this, but were in many cases aware of the weakness of riots and were looking for more effective forms of struggle. In the eighteen months after the riot, we in the League for the Revolutionary Party were coming into contact with dozens of such young workers in New York City alone.

Recently, we have seen this radicalized layer retreat a little: more uncertainty has developed as no explosion of struggle similar in size has occurred since the L.A. riot. But struggles of comparable size and explosiveness will be the order of the day in the immediate future in this country, whether they initially take the form of riots, mass strikes or demonstrations, and whether in response to racist attacks like the Rodney King case, budget cuts, layoffs or whatever. Then the working class's days of ignorance and apathy will be over, and the awakening of the working class, its grappling with the greatest of political questions will begin. The masses of working and poor people who today wallow in demoralization, will turn to making history, and building a new world!

But so far we have only talked about the masses awakening from the sleep you pointed to in your letter and questioning the system that brutalizes them. We have not dealt with how the workers will find the right answers to the questions posed by capitalism's crisis. We have dealt with the road to struggle and radicalization, but not the road to victory.

#### REVOLUTIONARY PARTY VS. REFORMISTS

The struggle against the capitalist system provides all the experience necessary for workers to come to revolutionary conclusions about society (like the need to overthrow the capitalist rulers and establish proletarian rule with the aim of building a classless society). The workers do not need any intellectual saviours to condescendingly teach them and lead them to salvation. But the coming to communist consciousness of workers is in no way automatic.

What is necessary is for the most class conscious, militant

workers to come together to build a *revolutionary workers' party* around a clear, scientific program of struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. The main task of the party is to raise the level of class consciousness of its fellow workers. The party does this not by abstractly commenting from afar on why capitalism needs to be overthrown. Rather, the revolutionary party participates in every struggle of working and poor people as the best fighters, no matter how small or partial the initial aims, in order to use the common experience of the class struggle to *prove* its argument that there is no solution to the exploitation, poverty and oppression of capitalism other than the workers' socialist revolution.

The revolutionary workers' party is made absolutely decisive by the role played by many other "leaders," both current and aspirant, of the workers' movement. Every time the working class in this country and elsewhere takes a step towards fighting back, their struggles are restrained by misleaders like the union bureaucrats, whose cooperation with the capitalists threatens to cripple the struggle at every step — or by "radicals" like Jesse Jackson who seek to divert the struggles of working and poor people into the electoral trap.

And every time militant workers begin to turn to revolu-

tionary ideas, the road to class consciousness is turned into an ideological maze by pseudo-socialists who in the name of Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism etc., serve only to restrict workers' perspectives to radically *reforming* the system — a dead end that time and time again leads the working class to defeat. So a key task of the revolutionary workers' party is to politically combat these misleaders, exposing their poisonous role both in theory and practice.

In building the revolutionary party today, the key is to attract the small number of most politically advanced, militant workers to the revolutionary program. That is the purpose of our magazine *Proletarian Revolution*. The aim must be to assemble, train and organize the most class conscious, militant and dedicated workers into the nucleus of the revolutionary party in time to intervene in the massive working class struggles which are just around the corner. Then, if the hundreds and thousands of workers and poor who will be radicalized find an organization of revolutionaries who can show the way forward in the struggle, with clear aims and methods of struggle, humanity will be taking a huge step toward liberation. ●

Matthew Richardson

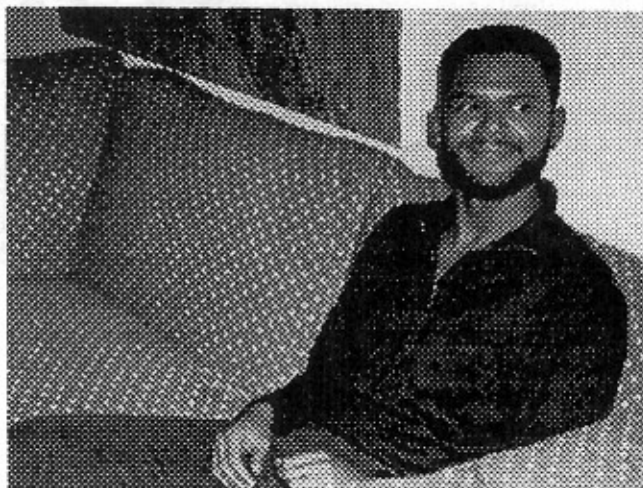
## Steven Marque Russell 1954—1994

Steve Russell died on September 30, 1994, after a long battle with AIDS. A passionate revolutionary communist who deeply hated the capitalist system and the misery it has inflicted on countless human beings, Steve was a member of the League for the Revolutionary Party in the early 1980's. He left membership not out of political disagreement nor any lessened hostility to capitalism, but for personal reasons. Even after leaving, Steve continued to participate in a whole range of activities with us. He could always be counted on to join in actions in defense of working-class interests.

Growing up as a Black man in American society, Steve was of course tremendously interested in the struggle against racism both here and abroad. He felt deeply that only with the overthrow of capitalist imperialism would racism, sexism and national chauvinism be destroyed. He was enormously interested in the growing socialist revolution in South Africa and was eagerly awaiting further word on the LRP/COFI's recent political work in that country when he died. He would have been greatly pleased with the news if we could have gotten it to him in time. Sadly, we could not.

A talented artist, Steve taught art and French in the New York City schools and was a member of the United Federation of Teachers. In the UFT, he fought the sell-out bureaucracy continually. Whereas this racist society is dedicated to debasing the image of Black people, many of Steve's dramatic oil paintings masterfully celebrated their human dignity.

A humane socialist society would have marshalled the resources to obliterate AIDS long ago. It was capitalism that killed Comrade Steve at the age of 40. He will be greatly missed but also remembered as we fight his murderers.



### The Steve Russell Fund

In South Africa today, there is a new generation of fighting young revolutionary workers. Cut off by the years of apartheid, they have an avid interest in learning more about the theory and history of the world communist movement. Unfortunately, there is a tremendous scarcity of classical Marxist literature in South Africa, and what is available is at a price these comrades cannot afford. Consequently we have committed ourselves to establishing a Workers' Library in Cape Town.

In order to carry out this task, the LRP has established the Steve Russell Fund to honor Comrade Steve's memory. We welcome donations of either money or books and pamphlets by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg. Send to: Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008. Checks should be earmarked for the Steve Russell Fund.

# LRP Advances South Africa Work

LRP National Secretary Sy Landy recently returned from a political tour of South Africa. Comrade Landy's meetings with leaders of unions and left organizations confirmed our view that the South African class struggle is the key to the coming world socialist revolution.

Many thousands of black workers understand that the present government led by the African National Congress is a facade for the same big capitalists who fattened off apartheid for decades. As we have argued in a series of articles now reprinted in the pamphlet *South Africa and Proletarian Revolution*, the ANC does not represent the interests of the black masses but those of the tiny layer of black capitalists and middle class. It has been summoned by the white capitalists to govern in order to stifle the powerful revolutionary struggles of the black masses.

## ANC AGAINST BLACK MASSES

Not surprisingly, the ANC-led government has done all it can to resist the masses' demands for justice. The new government has granted immunity from prosecution to the police and army torturers and assassins who tried to drown the black masses in their own blood throughout the years of apartheid. Against the call for confiscation of the property and profits of the white capitalists, the government has guaranteed the security of investments and profits, and has already demanded that the masses sacrifice "for the good of the economy."

And when workers have refused to hold back from struggling against their bosses and the government, the ANC has proved that it will unleash the violence of the old apartheid police and army against the black workers and poor. Following the elections, a massive strike wave erupted over wage and working conditions: miners occupied mines, truck drivers blockaded highways and thousands of workers picketed their workplaces. Under the direction of the ANC-led government, the police attacked strikers with attack dogs, tear gas, bullets and stun grenades to break the strikes.

At the opening of Parliament in mid-February, President Nelson Mandela denounced the black working class for its strikes, housing squatting, rent boycotts, "anarchy" and an overall "culture of entitlement." He warned the masses not to expect his government to fulfill its electoral promises to provide housing, education, health care and clean water.

## COMING STRUGGLES KEY TO WORLD REVOLUTION

Indeed, many workers thought that placing the ANC in power would accomplish the revolution they sought. But the failure of the government to improve living standards is obvious. For all the promises the ANC made of massive social programs, the government cannot show "a house, a sewerage pipe . . . a transformed township or a new school," according to South Africa's *Weekly Mail*. None of the masses' needs can be satisfied by bankrupt capitalism. Soon they will

see that the ANC is unalterably opposed to their aims; they will turn again to revolutionary struggles.

Under these conditions, explosions of struggle by the black workers and poor are around the corner. These upsurges promise to ignite the working classes of the world, above all because of the impact they will have on the workers of color — from the immigrant workers of Europe to the United States, Asia and Latin America — who have long taken the anti-apartheid struggle as a source of inspiration.



*Socialism is alive and still growing among South African workers. More and more are seeing through lies of ANC-Stalinist government.*

Moreover, the South African movement will teach the world's workers key lessons of the class struggle, from the need to break from the bourgeoisie and lead an independent struggle for power, to permanent revolution: that capitalism must be overthrown in order to win the democratic rights of the oppressed. The black workers of South Africa promise to be the vanguard of the world revolution.

But the South African struggle has been sidetracked by the ANC to this point because a genuinely revolutionary party of the most class-conscious black workers has not been built. Victory in the coming struggles can only come through the building such a party. Because of this, the LRP and the Communist Organization for the Fourth International have mobilized a major part of our attention and resources for work on South Africa. Hence Comrade Landy's visit.

In well-attended public as well as private talks, Comrade Landy spoke on topics including American imperialism and Haiti, the degeneration of the Fourth International and its coming re-creation, the Black struggle in America, the politics and development of the LRP-U.S. and the way forward in South Africa. He got an enthusiastic response, especially from young revolutionary-minded black workers. LRP publications, including *Proletarian Revolution* and our pamphlet on South Africa, sold out.

Comrade Landy met with a variety of political tendencies and engaged in serious discussions with a number of them. He was able to make closer ties with a group of now-independent revolutionaries with whom we have had past contact.

This tour, successful beyond our expectations, paves the way for trips in the near future by other comrades of the LRP. As well, we are collecting Marxist books and pamphlets unavailable in South Africa to help meet the need expressed by workers for revolutionary education. We will continue to cover the developing struggle in depth, as part of our work towards building an authentic revolutionary party in South Africa and fighting for the lessons taught by the South African struggle for the revolutionary workers of the world.

### TELLING THE TRUTH TO THE WORKING CLASS

In December the LRP was invited to send greetings to a conference called by the Workers Organization for Socialist Action in South Africa. We consider WOSA to be a centrist political group: its socialist words cover a reformist practice. (See PR 46 and 47.) Our message to WOSA's conference was intended to challenge its leaders on those grounds.

The League for the Revolutionary Party, U.S. section of the Communist Organization for the Fourth International, sends its greetings to the revolutionary workers of South Africa. In particular, we greet those who attend this conference in search of a revolutionary answer to the crisis posed by the ANC's accession to power in the capitalist Government of National Unity.

As the ANC government's austerity budgets and first armed attacks against striking workers have their impact upon the consciousness of the masses, and as the economic crisis increasingly limits the possibilities of trade union reform struggles, the workers will increasingly look to a political solution: the creation of an *independent mass party of the working class*. Let all the workers gather around this call!

In the struggle for such a party, South Africa's workers will have the greatest opportunity to learn that what is necessary is a *revolutionary party* that sets as its aim to lead the working class and the poor to the conquest of power: the smashing of the capitalist state and the defense of workers' democratic institutions through a *dictatorship of the prole-*

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## Haiti

*continued from page 40*

The U.S. military plans to strengthen and "professionalize" the Haitian military and police, which will lose only their most infamous officers. Despite token gestures toward defending the masses (and some genuine solidarity on the part of U.S. soldiers), the U.S. is protecting not only the bourgeoisie's homes and property, but also their FRAPH and Macoute thugs. Clinton & Co. are preparing Haiti for a more thorough reign of terror under the figleaf of "democracy."

The U.S. and U.N. have long been waging war on the Haitian masses. Along with the forced return of refugees to the tender mercies of the military thugs, they have enforced economic sanctions against Haiti. The ban on imports of essential goods and on export of manufactures hurt only the poor and working people, not the dictators or the million-

## South Africa and Proletarian Revolution

The South African black working class is the leading mass force in the struggle to overthrow world imperialism and free the human race. This new pamphlet, a collection of recent articles by Matthew Richardson, details the revolutionary lessons of the rich experience of the South African proletariat.

**A COFI Pamphlet**

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*ariat*, overseeing the transition to a classless society of abundance and freedom.

Revolution abhors equivocation. In the class struggle as in its conferences, there is no place for diplomacy. The basic duty of revolutionaries, as Trotsky taught us, is to "say what is, call things by their proper names." A proposal by revolutionaries to create an independent party of the working class can only be a step forward if they draw the sharpest line against the counterrevolutionary enemies of the working class: the ANC and SACP leaders who do all they can to disorganize and disorient the workers' struggles. In every struggle, no matter how small, fight for its victory under the banner: *The Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!*

Under the guidance of WOSA's leaders, the Workers List Party campaigned in the last election with a Manifesto that failed even to mention the inevitable ANC government and the threat it posed. Whether socialism could come peacefully or through revolution was also deemed unnecessary to explain.

If only one question is asked in the conference, revolutionary workers, ask this: have WOSA's leaders learned the lesson of this gravest of errors?

We join hands with all workers to declare: *Forward to an Independent Party of the Working Class!* To this we add the conclusions that must be drawn from this struggle: *The Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution! Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class! Re-create the Fourth International — World Party of Socialist Revolution!*●

aires who actually profited by smuggling.

Clinton, the U.S. bourgeoisie and its Haitian compradors have little respect for Aristide. Aristide's claim to power was his popularity; he had won a massive popular vote. The imperialists can't rely on him to enforce their austerity policies — they suspect he might come under pressure from the masses who have illusions that he represents them, not a sector of the bourgeoisie.

Aristide in fact made clear when in office three years ago that he was no threat to capitalism. He promised to pay Haiti's immense debt to imperialism, incurred by the monstrously corrupt and murderous Duvalierists, and pledged to cooperate with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, imperialism's financial enforcers. He ended price controls on basic foods, fired 5000 public workers and privatized state industries.

His promised goal then and now has been to "move the people from misery to poverty with dignity." This means a thin veneer of limited democratic reforms, with living stan-

dards shoved down even further. By keeping within capitalist parameters, Aristide accepts the impossibility of real gains.

Yet the capitalists and imperialists still distrust him. In office, he did not use the military to suppress the workers and peasants, who persisted in resisting their oppressors and made constant threats to bourgeois property. In fact, he tried to appease the masses by reforming the hated army and police. The Cédras coup proved his reforms meaningless.

Today, the economic and social crisis of world capitalism, especially in "third world" countries, is so deep that the bourgeoisie fears to invest wherever working people dare to fight back. As in South Africa, Palestine and elsewhere, the imperialist strategy is to first mislead and deceive the masses so that they can be softened up and thoroughly crushed.

#### **U.S. HANDS OFF CUBA!**

The occupation of Haiti also poses a threat to Cuba. Fidel Castro's pseudo-socialist regime is bitterly hated by all sections of the U.S. ruling class, which — despite Clinton's agreement with Castro to keep Cuban refugees at home — is trying to starve Cuba into submission. The defense of Cuba against imperialism is an essential task for all revolutionaries.

However, it is also critical to dispel illusions in Cuba as any sort of revolutionary beacon. Castro's Stalinist regime is hardly leading a fight against imperialism. Despite its opposition to the occupation, it called on the U.S. to use its "power of persuasion over the Haitian military" to get the dictators to leave (*Radio Havana*, Sept. 21), in effect urging imperialist intervention. As well, in his typical bourgeois nationalist fashion, Castro also endorses Aristide without mentioning his deals with imperialism. Castro seeks his own deal and therefore helps pave the way for imperialist advances across the Caribbean — including against Cuba. (See *PR 39* for an extended analysis.)

#### **THE U.S./ARISTIDE DEAL**

Aristide has done his best to earn his masters' trust. After his ouster, he made just about every concession the U.S. demanded. His latest sell-out, the "Strategy of Social and Economic Reconstruction," was presented to the World Bank in August. It commits his government to eliminate half its civil servants, privatize public services, drastically reduce tariffs and import restrictions (a boon to the wealthy merchants and a serious blow to thousands of small artisans and millions of peasants), cancel price and foreign exchange controls, aid the export sector, follow an "open foreign investment policy," set up special business courts with bourgeois judges, "limit the scope of state activity and regulation" and reduce the power of the Presidency in favor of Parliament.

The Plan says nothing about the urgent need to raise the minimum wage, now barely a dollar per day. As well, the first obligation of the new "aid" funds Haiti will get must go to pay off debts owed to the IMF & Co. As *Haiti Info* reports:

**The plan was presented [for Aristide] in part by Leslie Delatour, a member of Marc Bazin's private cabinet when he was Jean-Claude Duvalier's finance minister and a much-decried minister of finance under dictator Henri Namphy, when frequent demonstrations were held against his policies. ... At a Washington briefing, Delatour explained that Haiti's greatest asset was its "people," a veiled reference to the country's rock-bottom wages.**

If Aristide had run on his current platform — the Governor's Island accords, his "reconciliation" theme and reconstruction program — he would have been indistinguishable

from the open bourgeois candidates he defeated in 1990.

While the Haitian people had the right to have Aristide as their president when they chose him overwhelmingly, revolutionaries oppose his return as a figurehead for U.S. domination. Real self-determination will come with the arming of the workers and peasants. In Haiti, the demoralized armed forces could only rule over unarmed masses; they would never have lasted against an armed mass uprising. That is why the U.S. occupation aims to keep the people, not the army and police, disarmed.

#### **PERMANENT REVOLUTION**

President Aristide has already shown that he can't and won't fulfill even his own cynical program of "poverty with dignity" in the face of imperialism. (But it is predictable that he will yet vacillate between the demands of his imperialist masters and his need to provide a facade for the masses.) This confirms the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution: the struggle for bourgeois-democratic gains inextricably depends on the fight to end exploitation through socialist revolution. Even achieving "poverty with dignity" within the borders of a tiny impoverished nation under the guns of imperialism cannot be done without overthrowing Haiti's semi-colonial capitalism. This lesson the masses will learn in struggle despite Aristide's preachings.

In the imperialist stage of capitalism, no lasting democratic gains are possible without workers' rule. Even in Haiti, where the working class is a minority, it has stepped to the fore of the mass struggles. The revolution that brought down Duvalier developed from general strikes; at key junctures afterward workers built huge strikes that helped oust each successive military dictator. Under Aristide the "vigilance brigades" that defended popular quarters from Macoute resurgence were embryonic workers' militias that grouped unemployed youth and others behind proletarian leadership.

One essential ingredient was lacking: an internationalist revolutionary party of the working class. A revolutionary party would fight to build a workers' militia in Haiti as part of its strategy of overthrowing the armed capitalist state and replacing it with a workers' state.

However, the Haitian masses have to deal not only with the miserable Haitian army but with U.S. imperialism, armed to the teeth. An internationalist revolutionary party would urge fraternization with the American soldiers on a class basis. It would campaign for political solidarity with the working masses of the Caribbean, the United States, etc. — in order to make it impossible for imperialism to attack without risking a backlash at home.

#### **THE REVOLUTIONARY ROAD FORWARD**

The workers and peasants are recovering and preparing to fight again. Even the U.S. government knows that the people will sour on the occupation as their hopes are dashed. But misleaders are trying to divert the movement once more. Aristide and his supporters base themselves on the masses' bourgeois-democratic illusions, and are instilling false hopes about imperialist aid. The most class-conscious workers have to form a revolutionary party that can lead not only the workers but also the peasants and other working masses to power, based on their needs, aspirations and fighting spirit.

The scenes of Haitian masses overrunning police headquarters after Aristide's return were inspiring, but the fact that many then handed the guns over to the U.S. occupiers proves the need for revolutionary leadership. Working people

need all the arms they can get to defend their struggles — from Macoute thugs, from the U.S. defenders of capital and from Aristide's "reconciliationist" armed forces. A revolutionary party arms the proletariat militarily and politically. If a communist leadership is not built in time, the masses will go through the same bloody lessons over again as their struggles are betrayed by pro-capitalist leaderships.

The goal of a mass uprising could be to convene a democratic constituent assembly to decide on and implement the new society. But real democracy is impossible when one tiny class holds all economic power. Marxists stand for socialist revolution, in which the workers replace the bourgeois *state* with their own. Through a workers' state they would expropriate industry and transport, build ample public works and organize the economy to feed, house and employ all.

As permanent revolution teaches us, a workers' state isolated in one nation, especially a small and poor one, would be choked by imperialism. A Haitian revolution would have to spread to the Dominican Republic, throughout the Caribbean and further internationally. The increasingly angry world proletariat is looking for such a lead: Haitian workers' resistance to the occupation would ignite revolts across the world.

### THE ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

Revolutionary internationalism also teaches that the main enemy is at home. The left in the U.S. ought to be combatting American imperialism at its every turn. Many, however, called on Clinton to engineer the return of Aristide. Even if they now oppose the occupation, they helped pave the way for it. Groups like Solidarity and the Campaign for Peace and Democracy supported the U.S./U.N. sanctions, thereby endorsing imperialism's "right" to intervene.

Solidarity wrote in an editorial: "We supported the sanctions against South Africa because that is what the liberation movement demanded. Similarly, the popular movement in Haiti and the sole legitimate government of that country — led by Aristide — raise this demand today. We realize that it will impose grave sacrifices on the popular movements, but poor people always bear the price of their victory." (*Against the Current*, July/August 1994.) These are words of comfortable cynics. It is no "victory" when long-suffering masses are imposed upon to suffer passively still more.

Just as bad are those on the left who patronizingly refuse to say a word in public against Aristide. The Workers World Party is a leading practitioner: it promotes "Aristide's right to return" despite his deal with imperialism. Similarly, the International Socialist Organization says that the U.S. won't bring democracy, but its featured slogan for Haiti is "Support the Popular Movement." This is deliberately imprecise: it ignores the class distinction between the exploited masses and their misleaders, the "popular movement's" bourgeois Lavalas politicians associated with Aristide and his U.S. deal. Some "socialists" these, who talk only of democracy and won't fight for proletarian independence and revolution!

Another dodge comes from the misnamed Revolutionary Communist Party. Claiming that Aristide represents the Haitian middle classes against the "feudalists" (Maoist obfuscation for bourgeois landlords), the RCP writes: "These forces hate the oppression brought down on their country by imperialism and feudalism, but their class position makes it difficult for them to fully unleash the mass struggle and they fear an all-out confrontation with the reactionaries."

Bullshit. The bourgeois types behind Lavalas and Aristide want to halt the mass struggle, not "unleash" it, even

partially. And if they hate imperialism so much, why do they *fully* collaborate with it? These lies come straight from Mao's handbook for manipulating the masses: tail leftish capitalists and hope to leap over them to power — above all, don't tell workers the truth about their populist enemies.

A different deception comes from the Stalinist-tailing Spartacist League and Bolshevik Tendency (BT), who invoke the Cuban "workers' state" in order to leave the impression that Castro will support a Haitian revolution. As Castro himself makes clear, nothing could be further from reality.

### HAITIAN LEFT MISLED BY ARISTIDE

In Haiti, the restoration of Aristide generated confusion. Obviously the President still has mass support, although many are coming to realize that he has turned his back on the needs of the masses. This growing consciousness has not been helped by those "popular organizations" which condemned the U.S. occupation but still failed to break with Aristide.

For example, the Asanble Popilè Nasyonal (National Popular Assembly) said, "We have always been for the return of Aristide, and we always told him that we think that the return is something vital so that democracy can go forward in this country, but we never wanted him to return with an occupation force." For over a year at least, it was plain that Aristide planned to return no other way.

Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, founder and chief spokesman of a major peasant movement (and a hero of U.S. groups like the Anti-Intervention Committee), was in the delegation that prepared Aristide's disastrous attempted deal with Cédras. In October, Jean-Baptiste pointedly announced his opposition to the occupation. Still, he remains in Aristide's cabinet, undercutting the essential task of organizing the workers and peasants independent of the bourgeoisie.

Some Haitian groups openly oppose both the occupation and Aristide. But their alternative for Haiti takes the form of left-wing populism. Slogans like "Long live the autonomous struggles of the popular masses!" and "The only solution: democratic popular uprising leading up to popular revolution!" are raised by MOKAM (Haiti World Autonomous Culture Movement), KAP (Committee for a Progressive Alternative) and KILI (Unity-Struggle-Unity Committee).

Such slogans ignore the centrality of proletarian leadership and are rigidly stagist. In the belief that a working-class revolution is not on the agenda now, the would-be revolutionary left fails to fight publicly for the only way forward and thereby feeds the masses' bourgeois-democratic illusions.

Aristide's betrayal stems not only from his "opportunism" but from his class allegiance and program. He represents, now more clearly than ever, a wing of the Haitian ruling class with international ties. He must be fought on a class basis. If the most advanced workers are not educated scientifically to know who their enemies and friends are, they may end up fighting Aristide only to accept other bourgeois or middle-class leaders.

The task of communist revolutionaries is to tell the truth and show the way forward to the working class. Marxists stand for working-class independence so that a proletarian party can prove that the interests of the mass of its peasant allies lie with workers' power. Socialist revolution and the destruction of imperialism will never be accomplished by seeking temporary popularity and tailing the Mandelas and Aristides, who try to give super-exploitation a human face. Instead, let us build the revolutionary proletarian party in Haiti, the U.S. and everywhere!●

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Spring 1995

## Haitian Masses, Yes! U.S./Aristide, No!

Since last summer, LRP members have participated in many forums and rallies against the U.S. invasion of Haiti. On these occasions we have spoken out against all forms of capitulation to imperialism, including support for the occupation itself and advocacy of sanctions (which only further immiserate the Haitian masses). As well, we have opposed any support for President Aristide, whose deals with the U.S., the IMF & Co. aim at suppressing independent political activity by Haitian workers and peasants.

The LRP has also held discussions with several U.S. and Haitian left groups (BT, KAP, KILI, MOKAM — see below) in the hope of organizing joint activities unambiguously opposed to imperialism. A potential coalition initially agreed on the slogans, "U.S. Imperialism Out of Haiti Now!", "Stop Repression against the Oppressed Masses!" and "No Support for the Aristide Collaborationist Government!" The proposed coalition was not a political

bloc: each group would also have raised its own slogans, and each was free to criticize the politics of the others in public.

But the joint work stalled. KILI refused to sign joint leaflets publicizing the proposed actions; MOKAM then refused to continue working with them. In the reduced meetings, the LRP argued first for planning a public forum rather than a demonstration, given the small forces available; and then for holding the demonstration in the Haitian neighborhood in Brooklyn rather than in Manhattan. On both counts we were outvoted but agreed to the opposing view in order to guarantee *some* public activity. Still, nothing resulted: the Haitian groups dropped out one by one.

Then, at a February public meeting of the generally pro-Aristide Haiti Anti-Intervention Committee, MOKAM and KAP didn't show up, while a KILI spokesman failed to support interventions by the LRP and the BT criticizing Aristide's role. The anti-imperialist and anti-collaborationist effort collapsed for sectarian and opportunist reasons.

The article below is based on leaflets written by the LRP for our interventions last fall.

With President Aristide back in office, Bill Clinton, the liberal politicians and the mass media are proclaiming the

American occupation of Haiti to be a triumph for democracy.

This lie hides the imperialists' real aims. They are: 1) to prepare for the crushing of the Haitian workers and peasants and deepen their super-exploitation; 2) to stop the huge out-



Port-au-Prince, Sept. 1994: Haitian police repress pro-Aristide demonstration. U.S. marines, sent to "restore democracy," were present but did not intervene.

flow of Black refugees fleeing poverty and repression; 3) to serve notice to the masses at home and abroad, as well as to rival imperialist powers, that the U.S. can still throw its weight around when it wants to — especially since Haiti promised to be an easy military triumph, compared to other areas where U.S. foreign policy has been floundering.

### RACIST CONTEMPT FOR THE MASSES

The U.S. ruling class saw nothing fundamentally wrong with the rule of General Cédras, who overthrew Aristide on September 30, 1991 with U.S. connivance. But Washington finally decided that the naked reign of terror couldn't break the spirit of the masses, nor stop the wave of refugees.

At first the Haitian people celebrated the fall of the dictators with rallies of thousands, liberating food depots where profiteers stored "humanitarian aid" while allowing people to starve, meting out justice to every *attaché* they could get their hands on, and ransacking stations of the hated police. Their actions exemplified the revolutionary potential Clinton fears. In the future their movement will turn against the U.S. and its Haitian bourgeois allies, once the real role of the occupation becomes clear to them.

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