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End Anti-Immigrant Attacks!

by Eric Nacar

The New York cops' sadistic torture of Abner Louima, a Haitian emigré, was just the latest in a series of vicious acts against immigrants in recent years. Each scandal gets a few days of play in the bourgeois media. The public is rightfully outraged. Then — after politicians, clergymen and "community leaders" have sufficiently deplored the "incident" and appointed another "independent" commission — the story disappears. The public never hears about the case again. But the inhuman brutality goes on.

The tortures and murders reflect a daily, deep-seated and less often recorded horror. In sweatshops, factories and fields across the United States, millions of immigrants perform endless toil, usually under miserable conditions, for sub-standard wages and few or no benefits. In most cases they stay because there is no alternative. The pennies they earn mean sheer survival for themselves and their families. Whole economies depend on what immigrants can send back home.

BRUTALITY INHERENT IN U.S. CAPITALISM

The masses who have come to these shores in the past three decades have been allowed in not because the capitalist class that rules this land is warm and caring. The reason is superexploitation. As the profound rot of the capitalist system worsens, the bourgeoisie tries to gobble up every last bit



of possible profit. Since profit can only come from labor, the harder workers work and the less they are paid, the more the bosses gain. Vulnerable immigrants are ideal for this purpose.

The cops, politicians and government agents who harass immigrants are a necessary part of the system. Blaming immigrants for capitalism's economic assault on the working class as a whole helps prevent classwide resistance. It is not just words. The vast federal bureaucracy that oversees immigration, as well as the state and city police forces, have as one of their chief duties the intimidation of immigrants. Hiring

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COFI and LRP Report

We have an unusually large amount of national and international work to report on since the previous *Proletarian Revolution*. Separate articles in this issue cover our national convention, the visit of WIVL leader Leon Caesar, a debate with WoVo, the New York cop brutality protests and the 1199 contract struggle. As always, we invite readers to write or call for more information and for sample leaflets. Call New York : (212) 962 6464 or Chicago: (773) 463 1340.

UPS STRIKE AND THE LEFT

During the UPS strike, the LRP was extremely active in both Chicago and New York, on picket lines and at rallies. (Our strike leaflet is available on request.) There were also several left meetings in Chicago dealing with the strike.

On August 18, the Chicago LRP attended the first — and last — meeting of the UPS Strike Support Committee, a formation basically created by the International Socialist Organization (ISO) with the apparent endorsement of some union officials. The ISO had swamped a Jobs for Justice meeting to call for a support rally; this occurred on August 16, with the backing of Gerry Zero of Teamsters local 705 (UPS workers) and Michael Balanoff of SEIU local 73. The rally, which did not have the endorsement of the Chicago Federation of Labor, drew about 500 people. Zero also gave the ISO office space at Teamster City and the authority to convene the support committee. The ISO proceeded to send out letters on IBT stationery without authorization, attempting to build up attendance for the committee meeting.

By the night of the first meeting, union leaders and their supporters in Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and the left group Solidarity were anxious to kill the Strike Support Committee. In order to do this indirectly, they argued that since Jobs with Justice already existed there was no need for another committee. The ISO was eager to have its own sandbox and, in the ensuing discussion, stressed the need for raising money for the strikers. We and others urged mass action in support of the strike — including proposing alternatives to the union leadership's pacifist line of not blocking scabs. But in the end the body voted by 19 to 13 to dissolve the Committee. We note that the ISO held five votes. But unwilling to challenge union bureaucrats, the ISO joined them to form the majority. The episode adds new meaning to the term "liquidationist."

The announcement of the main contract settlement came later that night. After the fact the ISO paper criticized the local bureaucrats heavily: they "let management roll over workers." (*Socialist Worker*, Sept. 12.) This is like what the ISO did during the Staley strike: mute their criticisms of union leaders during the strike but criticize after it was defeated, when it's too late to have any impact on the course of struggle. (See "ISO's Right Turn to Labor," *PR* 51.)

On September 6, the LRP attended a meeting on the UPS strike sponsored by a left coalition called Working People's Action & Education Network (WPAEN). Two UPS workers noted how things had gotten worse on the shop floor since the strike ended. WPAEN leader Earl Silbar criticized the union leadership for not resisting Clinton's pressure. An LRP supporter pointed out that we, in contrast to the WPAEN, had criticized the leadership during the strike itself.

On September 19, Solidarity held a meeting on the lessons of the strike. Speakers were Martha Gruel from TDU

in Detroit and Solidarity leader Dan LaBotz. Solidarity's main theme was praise for TDU. As LaBotz put it, "Without TDU, no Carey; without Carey, no UPS victory." This top-down interpretation also completely covered up the limits of both Carey's strike strategy and the contract victory, both closely linked to the leadership's reformism.

Incredibly, LaBotz also said: "The government tried to come in and take over the Teamsters, but TDU stood up and said no, we want the ranks to elect their leaders and have control, not the government" — as if the TDU hadn't called for years for federal intervention to clean up the union and for government oversight of Teamster elections!

As an LRPer from the floor pointed out, even now, TDU and Solidarity swallow the government intervention against Carey: the flyer for the meeting said "What does Carey have to do to win the election?" — not challenging the federal monitor's decision to re-run the vote. And with all the hoopla about the Carey campaign's crooked funding links with the Democratic Party, all TDU leader Ken Paff could say was that "The government should investigate and ban Hoffa too"! Great: let's bring the state in even deeper!

Gruel in response said, "I think getting democracy and elections was the main goal, and we had to allow government intervention, but I think it was justified and we just disagree." LaBotz started by saying, "Well, since I've been accused of lying," and then gave an account more honest than his main speech. But he justified the TDU line by saying "The state is always in the union structure," citing the NLRB and other agencies. He finally acknowledged "contradictions," saying "this oversight, this meddling, is problematic." A typical centrist contribution.

In addition to the LRP, the ISO also spoke in opposition to government intervention — hypocritically, since they had supported the consent decree that brought the feds in.

WORKFARE POLITICS

The LRP has posed a fight against the labor bureaucracy and Democratic Party pals as central to the defense of workfare workers. We have found receptivity to our point of view among workfare workers, and special interest in the last issue of *PR* featuring the "Stop Workfare" article. Thanks to all who contributed to our request for funds which helped with distributions among workfare workers!

Much of the left disagrees with our view, and has behaved accordingly. On May 1 we attended a sparse rally called by the Communist Party on behalf of workfare workers. These were the worst moments from the podium: 1) A long anti-Giuliani, pro-Democratic Party rap that went in

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Lessons of the UPS Victory

by Dave Franklin

Workers at UPS have waged a successful fight against their bosses in a high-profile, important contract struggle. For too long, takebacks, strikebreaking and court injunctions have dominated the labor battlefield. The beating back of the brunt of UPS's attacks — while even gaining some concessions from UPS — was sweet indeed. We savored the moment with the Teamster strikers and tens of millions of workers who supported them. Workers clearly won this battle and showed a hint of their power at the point of production.

But a sober look at events also reveals significant weaknesses in the strike strategy pursued by the Carey leadership, and in the actual agreement. These limitations will hamper workers in the near future if they are not overcome. As we will explain, the strike showed the power of the working class but at the same time the limitations of a victory accomplished under the pro-capitalist union leaders.

BOSSSES UNDERESTIMATE UNION

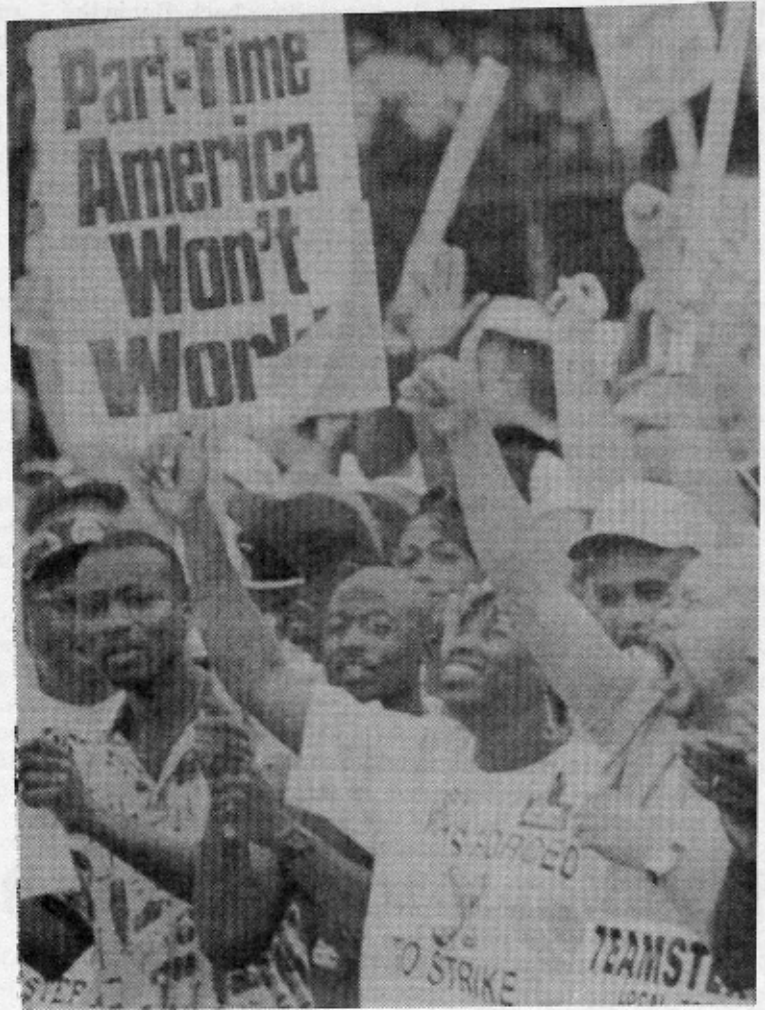
The strike occurred because UPS management pursued such a hard-line strategy that the union leaders had little choice but to walk out if they were to maintain credibility. Its hardball stance was a gross misestimation of the union's strength. The bosses not only rejected Carey's modest proposals for improvements in the status and percentage of part-timers; they demanded the abolition of the multi-employer pension plan — in order to grab profits from a fund they would run themselves. They also wanted curbs on honoring picket lines and other sacrifices.

UPS had clear supremacy in the surface parcel business and had made over \$1 billion in the past year. This bonanza rested largely on the ever-increasing use of low-paid part-time labor, which now comprises 60 percent of the workforce (and over 80 percent of new hires in the past contract period).

But if greed was clouding the bosses' vision, they had reason to believe they could succeed, and not just because the Teamster strike fund was low. They had seen union after union cave in to capitalist demands or conduct isolated and passive struggles that were all too often crushed. There are differences between Lane Kirkland and the "old guard" like Teamster officials supporting Hoffa Jr. against Carey, and "reform" leaders like Carey and AFL-CIO president Sweeney: the latter have shown a little more flair for organizing and militant rhetoric. It was nonetheless under their direction that the Detroit newspaper strike was isolated and ultimately crushed. The bosses also thought that the Hoffa-Carey split would undermine the strike. Why not expect another victory for the bosses at UPS?

CAREY'S ROLE

As President of the Teamsters, Carey had played a key and conscious role in letting the Detroit strike drag on, pushing the hopeless boycott strategy and finally shutting down the strike and completing the betrayal. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 54) Despite the fact that the Detroit locals are controlled by Hoffa supporters, Carey was hardly an innocent victim in the matter. However, he saw the battle against UPS as more critical to his base, and the signals he gave to the ranks were different. In the year before the strike, the leadership called several meetings and rallies,



UPS strike drew widespread working-class support.

conducted surveys, etc. to set the stage.

When the strike began, the Teamsters' walkout (with UPS pilots in support) was near total. The ranks went out confident, with no fear that they would be left languishing on the picket lines for months if not years. This is an important point: when convinced they are being adequately backed, workers will go into struggle even in a dire labor climate.

Once the walkout was accomplished, the strike had a number of things going for it. The sheer size and "tight ship" nature of the UPS operation made it impossible to run it in a normal way by supervisor scabs alone. UPS was not in a business that could stockpile goods to wait out a strike. Their services were being rapidly assumed by other companies like the Post Office and Federal Express, so they were in danger of losing long-term corporate customers.

And very importantly, an overwhelming majority of the working class backed the strike, particularly over the part-time issue. Workers all over have experienced enough of downsizing and part-timing to identify with the strikers, even when most don't have unions of their own. The strike had particular resonance with workers of color, who form a disproportionate segment of the part-timers at UPS. The strike's popularity also pushed Sweeney and other AFL-CIO unions to give money and overt support. Broad working-class sup-

port was a signal not only to the UPS bosses but to the entire capitalist class to move cautiously.

UPS had asked Clinton to invoke the notoriously anti-labor Taft-Hartley act and order the workers back. But in the face of an extremely popular strike, Clinton found it hard to order a return while maintaining any semblance of evenhandedness. He also owed Carey a favor for his electoral support via staff help and campaign funds. Still, Clinton did pressure the union to settle for less than it had asked for, and signaled that he would change his attitude if the strike went on longer. Since Carey's strategy relied on the Democrats and not the mass action of the workers, he had to move toward a settlement at that point.

The bosses tossed out their "last, best and final" offer and settled for something considerably less to their liking. They could not scrap the pension plan. They agreed to most of the union's formula for converting part-timers, and ceded ground on sub-contracting. The union kept its right to honor picket lines. Full-time workers got pay increases of \$3.10 over five years, and part-timers a 35 percent increase over 5 years. There was a general perception from workers and capitalists alike that the union had come out better. In general we agree — and, barring undisclosed surprises in contract terms, consider the contract supportable.

WEAKNESSES OF THE CONTRACT

But even though all labor contracts are compromises with bosses, there are serious flaws in this one. The part-time conversion clause only makes the smallest dent into improving the plight of part-timers. Differentials between old and new part-timers were extended, as were those between full and part-timers and between old and new full-timers. The crux of the problem has been that UPS and the bosses in general prefer hiring part-timers because they get lower wages. This dynamic toward preferring new hires, particularly new lower paid part-timers, has hardly been ended.

Another obvious problem is the failure of the contract to protect against layoffs, a problem which may come back to haunt the unions despite the fact that the initial layoffs were more of a temporary slap on the wrist than a serious attack. Further was the union's ceding to the bosses' desire for a 5-year contract (therefore lessening the speed of the conversion of 10,000 part-timers to full time, as the union demanded.) As with so many contracts, some of the worst clauses dribbled out of the media only after the initial hoopla. These included even greater management freedom to bust ass on the workfloor, the right to decide which part-timers get converted, and the right to opt out of part-time conversions in case of a business downturn.

These points are critical when the incredible turnover of part-timers is considered — 400 percent in 1996! — as UPS cheerfully chews them up, spits them out and hires new ones. Masses of part-timers will see little of the contract gains before they are finished, while management will have greater flexibility to screw them while they are there. (Whether the bosses can actually tighten the screws will be a key test of the post-contract period.) Even before the contract compromise, one union official stated that "we recognize that most part-timers can't and won't ever become full timers." It is clear that the continued use and gross abuse of part-timers remains at the core of UPS business strategy — with the blessing of the union leadership.

Strike strategy was also weak. If the Carey leadership mobilized the union to actually start the walkout, it was

another matter once that initial task was accomplished. There was a clear danger of mass scabbing. Outside scabs by themselves could not have broken the strike, given the level of skill and familiarity required for the work; but a kick-off in scabbing by outsiders could have demoralized and scared strikers into starting a movement to go back.

The immediate counter to mass scab-herding would have had to be mass militant picket lines — spirited centers of strikers and supporters ready to take on scabs and cops where possible. But the pickets were generally passive, sparse, ill-informed exercises. They were far from prepared to take on any mass defense — and no wonder, since Carey had no plan to. Carey rested heavily on his Democratic friends. But what if management had more stamina? Clinton & Co. would have abandoned their pretense of neutrality had a protracted struggle forced the union into a mass action strategy.

There is an even more critical question. What if Carey had held out for a better deal? We saw a big victory in this strike, but given the power of UPS workers and the popularity of the strike, it could have been a far bigger struggle and a far bigger victory. During the strike, in order to both prepare strikers for the immediate threat of scabberding and to build the struggle in general, the LRP agitated for strike committees, mass citywide rallies to back the strikes and the preparation of mass pickets to prevent scabs. As one of our leaflets pointed out:

A victorious rank and file will be in position to press for decent demands, beyond what the leadership has accepted, like a genuine rollback of part-time labor in favor of full-time jobs. And it can have massive effects throughout labor, organized and unorganized. Consider the impact on FedEx workers, for example. It can be a real turning point in the class struggle.

The UPS victory has been a real shot in the arm for labor. But because it was qualified and was won under particularly favorable circumstances, the strike cannot in itself be a model for the fight against part-time jobs and for decent jobs for all that the entire working class is clearly interested in. Nevertheless, revolutionaries must still use the lessons of this important victory and apply them to the looming and titanic class battles ahead.

UPS VICTORY INSPIRES ORGANIZING DRIVE

The union hopes to use the UPS victory as a spur to organize masses of part-time and lower-paid workers. This goal demonstrates both the inspiring effects of the UPS victory and the concrete limits of the UPS strike as well. For example, the Teamsters have declared an organizing drive at FedEx, a welcome turn — to say the least!

But the labor bureaucracy, because of its support for the capitalist system, has no desire for militant class battles in which workers could get out of hand. They prefer passive, sign-'em-up campaigns as their version of mass organizing. Only when absolutely forced to will they resort to strikes — and even then in the most conservative fashion. They rely on the "good cops" of the Democratic Party and the capitalist state. This strategy was played out during the UPS strike. But how will such a strategy work at FedEx, a notoriously anti-union outfit that has succeeded because it functions as a part-time meat grinder? This is an operation that will not hesitate to use any means — lockouts, mass scabbing, etc. — from the get-go to smash the workers. It also has much less fat on its bones than the highly profitable UPS.

Only a strategy that relies on mass defense and mass confrontation — against the scabs, the bosses, the cops and capitalist politicians — could force unionization and significant gains for the workers at FedEx. This includes weapons like mass pickets, flying pickets, and sit-downs. This means relying not only on Teamsters and the passive sympathies of the working class at large but building a generalized fighting workers' movement. No bureaucrats will conduct such a struggle on their own. They will only be forced to by mass pressure, under the penalty of being swept out of power.

FINANCIAL SHENANIGANS

This brings up another limitation on the victory that is coming to the fore at the moment. Not only was Clinton allowed to look good because of the way the strike ended, but the government's right to intervene in union affairs (as a supposedly benevolent force) was strengthened. To his discredit, Carey had supported state intervention into the union in order to get elected in the first place. So he was hardly in a position to oppose the government when, in the aftermath of the strike, it proceeded to force new elections. As we go to press, the government is even threatening to bar Carey from running again. Instead of outrage, Carey and his team are reacting with disgusting humility.

Revolutionaries don't defend financial shenanigans by Carey's friends or the wholesale looting of the membership made famous by elements of the Old Guard. But we do oppose every act of state intervention into the unions as a dangerous intrusion into the workers' major organizations of defense. We warn our fellow workers that failure to fight against state intervention and for the independence of the

unions from the state can only lead to disaster for our class.

But if mass militancy can help to gain significant labor victories, it is only one component of the necessary road ahead. No lasting defense or improvement in workers' living standards is possible under capitalism. The capitalist system is in deep decay: the upturn of the past several years has been built on an intensified exploitation of workers and oppressed people — as UPS fittingly symbolizes. And the "recovery," such as it is, will not last.

The value of the strike is that it affirmed the power of the working class, and in particular of the strike weapon. For years the labor bureaucrats have pointed to the defeats of isolated strikes and championed a strategy of concessions, passive boycotts and electoralism as a substitute. Much of the reason for the success of the UPS strike was that the strikers weren't isolated, another key lesson.

For years the LRP has been advocating a general strike as a tool that can use the power of the working class and unify our class based on its common interests — factors the UPS strike pointed to. While the bureaucrats kept their heads in the sand, not only decent full-time jobs went down the tubes. Cuts to social services, anti-immigrant legislation, slave-labor "workfare" schemes, and vicious racism and police brutality have ravaged the lives of working people. A general strike would begin to provide a real defense by uniting workers against the capitalist attacks across the board.

The intervention of revolutionists with a socialist program can convince the most advanced elements of the proletariat of the necessity for revolution. We can only hope that the UPS victory signals the beginnings of the rising struggle of the American working class. •

New York Hospital Contract: Strike or Surrender?

Dennis Rivera, president of the Hospital Workers Union 1199 in New York, is upset. The bosses in the League of Voluntary Hospitals are not being "fair" to hospital workers. For years, 1199 has marched, lobbied and used its political muscle to help funnel billions of dollars into the hospitals. Having done such splendid work for management, Rivera expected to get a few crumbs thrown his way.

Now, facing the threat of thousands of layoffs, Rivera gambled that he could convince the bosses to give him a contract reopener that would extend the job security provisions of the 1992 contract, in return for a guarantee of labor peace and further cooperation. The union proposed this last February, as a way to avoid a strike when the contract with League hospitals expires at the end of June 1998.

But the hospital bosses have refused to negotiate. Management's mouthpiece, Bruce McIver, told the union negotiating committee on September 4 that 10-15,000 jobs will be lost from League and Catholic hospitals.

Rivera's gamble has weakened the fight for a new contract. Spreading illusions that layoffs can be fought without a strike and promoting the union's alleged good relationship with management has left the ranks unprepared to fight.

This was evident on September 16, when thousands of 1199ers marched down Broadway to Times Square in an impressive display of 1199's potential strength. However, the mood was more anxious than militant. There were no fighting demands; the purpose of the rally was anybody's guess. Rivera's scheme had clearly failed, and the union also failed

to inform the ranks about what was happening. By the time Rivera spoke, most of the crowd had left. Thus, when he got to mentioning that the union is faced with the task of building a strike to fight layoffs, most workers were not around to hear it.

UNION LEAVES MEMBERS UNPREPARED

As a result of Rivera's misleadership, hospital workers are faced with the difficult task of engaging in a life and death struggle without a clear strategy. Rivera's current claim to be advocating a strike inspires neither fear from management nor confidence from the ranks of hospital workers.

Nevertheless, a strike *is* necessary. As the LRP leaflet for the September march stated:

The UPS strike showed that the bosses will only respect the workers and their unions when workers are willing to fight. Hospital management will continue to attack 1199 workers as long as they are convinced workers are unwilling to strike to defend themselves.

Rivera often blames 1199 members for not wanting to strike. And it's true, workers are reluctant. They've seen too many isolated strikes go down to defeat in recent years. They've seen their union leadership cave in to management and allow layoffs and violations of the contract. All this has created demoralization. But this is a function of leadership. And 1199's leaders treat their members with contempt, calling them out for mass mobilizations without laying out a strategy and without any prospect of action.

BACKGROUND TO THE CURRENT IMPASSE

Despite his claim that he wants a campaign with mass mobilizations, Rivera has often sabotaged efforts to bring out the ranks. For example, in early May delegates were told that there would be a mass meeting. Rivera also promised to call mass demonstrations in early to mid-June. However, June came and went without a mass meeting or rally.

Rivera finally carried out his promise of a mass meeting — on July 30, the day before the deadline given to management for reopening the contract. The leadership no doubt hoped to have a deal by then and avoid any mass actions. Convinced workers wouldn't show up in mass, the cynical union leadership went ahead with the rally. When an overflow crowd turned up, the leadership had to work hard to placate angry members unable to get in the Madison Square Garden theater.

While the membership turned out in force, the leadership announced that any further negotiations were postponed until after Labor Day. And nothing else! The Garden rally itself was mostly entertainment with a few boring speeches that said nothing to mobilize members into action. There was no discussion from the floor and no opportunity for members to express their views. Any momentum created by the tremendous turnout was squandered by the leadership.

Throughout the reopener campaign, Rivera has made it clear that his strategy is to count on management rewarding him for all the money he has brought to the hospitals. Rivera has constantly referred to the union's good relationship with management over the last several years — something that is news to 1199 members fighting off management efforts to violate the contract at every turn. As our leaflet argued,

Unity with management is a recipe for disaster. Instead of an all-out fight against layoffs and efforts to cut jobs, the union leadership wants to help management in its efforts to downsize the health care system. Rivera's contract demands accept that by the end of the contract there will be fewer hospital workers. Even if we believed Rivera's claim that downsizing can be done without layoffs (which we don't), Rivera's job-cutting approach involves concessions on work rules that allows management to redefine jobs. This means speed-up and harassment on the job as fewer workers will have to work harder and do several jobs to keep things running.

"DEALING WITH THE DEVIL"

The most stunning example of Rivera's betrayal of the working class was reported in the July 16 *New York Times*. Rivera used his considerable influence in Democratic politics to get the Clinton administration to block Governor Pataki's plan to force Medicaid patients into HMO's. In meeting after meeting, Rivera has dragged out experts to explain to delegates and members of the Negotiating Committee how HMO's are strangling the health care system by denying patients access to needed care. The increasing domination of the health care system by managed care, Rivera and his experts warned, would mean the loss of hospital beds and jobs — and inadequate care for patients.

But then Rivera struck a deal to support Pataki's attack on Medicaid patients — in exchange for over a billion dollars to be given to the hospitals to open community-based clinics. Part of this money is supposed to go to retraining 1199 members, so that when they lose their hospital jobs as a result of the shrinkage of the hospital system, they'll be able to get jobs in clinics.

Rivera himself rightly called this a deal with the devil. It sells out not only Medicaid patients but also 1199 members. Workers may still have union jobs, but not the same pay and conditions. And of course it is just a lie to say that clinics will provide the same number of jobs as 24-hour hospitals.

The chief demands being put forward for the contract job security and early retirement go hand-in-hand. Job security is also being proposed as something that can be won if workers can come up with ways for the bosses to eliminate jobs primarily through early retirement. What's being proposed is a buyout using \$4.2 in surplus pension funds! Rivera isn't even asking management to fund the buyout. He proposes to hand over to the bosses money that belongs to hospital workers, that could be used to finance better retirement benefits for all 1199 members for years to come. And this early retirement proposal is not to make way for younger workers but to reduce the number of hospital jobs.

PREPARE TO STRIKE!

Even after all this, Rivera could not negotiate a deal. The hospitals are planning massive layoffs and want even more concessions from the union. Rivera is now forced to talk about a strike. Based on his track record, there is no reason to believe Rivera will use the next 10 months to prepare a serious strike, unless he is forced to by the workers themselves. Workers can expect that at the first opportunity, the union leadership will try to back away from a real fight by negotiating a sellout behind the workers' backs. Preparing to strike means preparing to fight any vacillations and betrayals by the leadership.

As we have explained in union meetings and leaflets, Rivera's pathetic attempts to wangle a deal, and his avoidance of strike action, derive from his support for capitalism in general and, inevitably, of the notion that workers must sacrifice so that the hospitals can make profits. Therefore workers' primary need is to build an revolutionary leadership that opposes capitalism and fights for the *workers'* interests.

Such a party will be built through struggle, even under the present union leadership. The UPS strike showed that sometimes even the reformists are forced to fight. Despite Carey's reluctance to use the full power of the union in an all-out fight, a victory was won, even if limited.

Of course, 1199ers are looking at a much more difficult struggle. Whereas UPS is an enormously profitable, expanding company, the hospital industry in New York and elsewhere is in a feeding frenzy of mergers and downsizing. Whereas UPS could temporarily afford to buy labor peace, the hospitals are under tremendous pressure to eliminate jobs and union gains in order to compete and survive.

Despite the differences, the UPS strike can serve as an important example. The victory came not only from the unity and strength of the Teamster but also from the widespread support that a strike against part-time and two-tier inequality received. That is why 1199ers need to connect their fight for hospital jobs to a classwide fight for jobs.

In the months ahead the LRP will continue to expose the class collaboration of the Rivera leadership while arguing for a strike strategy based on mass mobilizations of the ranks. The power of the union can be used to fight for a decent contract and also spark the classwide fight against layoffs and cutbacks that is desperately needed. We advocate a general strike and other mass actions based on the tremendous power workers have to shut down production and capitalist operations. ●

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Carl Cowl 1900-1997

A Personal and Political Remembrance

by Sy Landy

Carl Cowl died in April of this year. At 96 years of age, he still believed in the necessity of socialist revolution, the same goal which had given so much meaning to his youth.

Throughout his life, Carl never surrendered the idea that humanity needed communism if it were to survive and if its culture were to flower. However, it is true that during his middle years his belief in the possibility of actually achieving such a classless society had waned. When I got to know him, he was an old man. And in his old age, he had recaptured much of his youthful belief that the proletariat could and would make the revolution.

His re-engagement with the far left was a vigorous pursuit. It was no hobby designed to maintain an illusion of life while sinking into the grave. That couldn't be, given who Carl was. By nature he was restless, relentless and creative — a dogged fighter and an achiever. When age kept adding physical problems, he angrily treated them as damnable stumbling blocks placed in his path that were continually forcing him to either hurdle or evade. They were miserable drains on his energy and time. But he never allowed these impediments to stop him from trying to attain his cultural and political goals. So in his last years he was the same man he had always been — just more frequently exasperated and certainly, it must be admitted, crankier. He went out still engaged and still enraged — snarling and fighting.

A FOUNDING COMMUNIST AND TROTSKYIST

Carl grew up in Duluth, Minnesota. He had been born into the workers' movement. His immigrant Jewish father had been a socialist militant in the old cigar makers' union. Among leftist youth today, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) — the Wobblies — is the stuff of legends, a militant mass proletarian movement of American-born and immigrant toilers who aimed at creating one big industrial union, a fighting arm for the entire working class in its struggle against the bosses. For Carl the IWW was no legend. He served his apprenticeship in that rough-and-tumble syndicalist movement as a teenager, working as a migrant agricultural laborer and as an organizer.

In 1919, as a college student inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution, he became a founding member of the Young Communist League and soon thereafter joined the early Communist Party. He became a party organizer in the Midwest. In 1928 he was thrown out of the Communist Party along with others, led by Jim Cannon, who identified with the struggle against the growing menace of Stalinism being waged by Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition. He served as secretary of the Minneapolis branch of the Communist League of America (CLA), the U.S. section of the International Left Opposition. As such he was active during the famous Teamster strike that broke out in 1934 in Minneapolis. Trotskyists played a crucial leading role in this working class eruption which not only put the Teamsters' union on the map but helped initiate the massive working-class upsurge that convulsed the whole nation in the 1930's.

In 1935, Carl was part of a split from the Trotskyists spearheaded by Hugo Oehler. After a period of time, he became a leading member of a group led by Tommy Stamm, an offshoot of the Oehlerites. During these years he had

various jobs. He edited an organizational newspaper; he was an autoworker and then became a seaman in the merchant marine. After the Stammites abandoned their organization in the middle 1940's, Carl left the political scene, having lost hope for the success of socialist revolution.

In the early 1960's, himself in his 60's, Carl went to Brooklyn College and became a musicologist. Unfortunately, he began having hearing problems which seriously hampered his work in this field. Nevertheless, even in his 90's, he would upon occasion sing for his friends; he accompanied himself on a piano which he himself had constructed in earlier times. Partially thwarted with respect to music, Carl intensified his study of languages. He became wholly or reasonably fluent in a range of languages, including Spanish, German, Yiddish, Hebrew, Arabic, and Ladino (the medieval language once spoken by Spanish Jews).

Carl administered the literary estate of the outstanding Jamaican Black poet and early communist Claude McKay, a friend from the 1920's. He also amassed a huge library, which included a notable collection of old and scarce works in Arabic. In his last years, he was engaged in producing two books. He was working on a biography of a noted Scots musicologist. As well, he had discovered and translated a manuscript written by an old Jewish folk doctor and herbalist in a small 19th-century *shtetl* in Poland, who had meticulously recorded remedies (and circumcisions!). When I last saw Carl in late 1996, he was busy writing a commentary on the manuscript for publication. Whether he had completed the work on one or both of these projects I don't know.

DISCUSSIONS AND DISAGREEMENTS

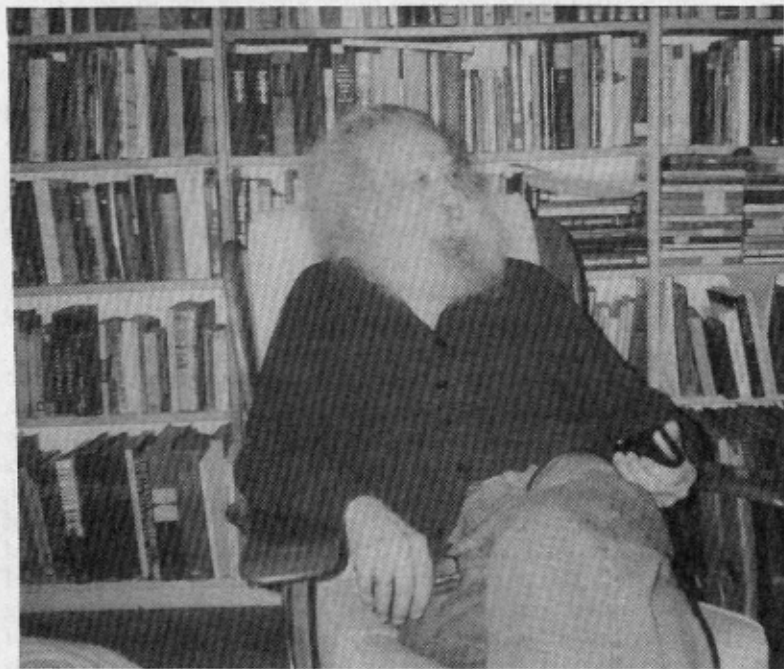
I met Carl for the first time in 1975. His interest in socialist politics had escalated, and he was avidly reading left publications and going to various meetings. We became friends; on occasion we talked and argued well into the night. In 1977, he asked to join the LRP. I had learned a lot from him. It was hard to refuse his request. But there were two main reasons.

1. Carl had become fixated upon the issue of entryism. In discussion, he returned to it time and again. In the middle-late 1930's, Trotsky had urged his followers in a number of countries where their groups remained small to link up with a developing current of left-moving workers who were joining the much larger social democratic parties. The idea was to enter such parties, do battle with the reformist misleaders and guide these fellow workers into the ranks of the Fourth International. In the U.S., the Trotskyists entered the Socialist Party, a move opposed by the Oehlerites, including Carl.

For Trotsky, and for us, such an entry was a tactical question. For Carl it was both impermissible and a sign of Trotsky's abandonment of revolution. It meant that Carl never really accepted the Transitional Program or the Fourth International. In our opinion, his differences were not just historical but basic and immediate.

2. After Carl departed from the organized left and abandoned his commitment to the working class and revolution in the 1940's, he substituted a belief in Israel and increasingly identified with its struggle. When we first met, he vociferously rejected any hint that Israel was inherently

chauvinist and steadfastly denied that he held any anti-Arab sentiment. Given his interests and humanist outlook, I never questioned the sincerity of his subjective dedication to Arab culture and the welfare of Arab people. However, I did stress the inconsistency between such feelings and his support for the Jewish settler-state. After our initial exchanges over this question, he exploded. Future discussions on this issue met



the same response.

Marxists had confidently expected that proletarian revolution would break out internationally at the end of the Second World War. When all such revolts were crushed, many broke with revolutionary politics. Some enlisted in America's Cold War. Others moved toward Stalinism. Embittered and cynical, the proletariat became "the God that Failed." In Carl's case, he knew intellectually that the defeat occurred as a result of Stalinism; emotionally it was another story. Consequently, he embraced Israel. It was no accident that this was the one belief that he couldn't rationally defend in all our discussions over the years. Unfortunately, his identification with Israel persisted even when he re-entered left politics.

Given our disagreements, it was obvious that Carl did not belong in the LRP.

NO "MUSEUM PIECE"

While travelling in England in the early 1980's, Carl came into contact with Tony Cliff and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of that country. On his return to the U.S., he joined the American Cliffites, the International Socialist Organization (ISO). He often travelled to Britain and toured for the SWP, giving speeches on various topics.

He remained a member of the U.S. group until his death. However, over the years, he grew more and more contemptuous of the ISO. It was hard not to be. From our point of view, the Oehlerites had been political ultra-lefts but they were nothing like the petty bureaucrats who lead the ISO and combine a pathetic organizational sectarianism with political opportunism.

More than once Carl made the mistake of inviting LRP members to ISO public meetings where we put forward our

political views and disagreements. He quickly found that we would be barred from such events whenever the bureaucrats could get away with doing so. Carl openly and frequently called the ISO a cowardly organization afraid to confront honest political opponents. He maintained his membership out of his belief in Cliffite "third camp" politics and what he felt was its identification with rank-and-file reform of the unions. Despite our arguments, we could not convince him that the British group was only a larger version of the U.S. organization. He considered it a genuine workers' party as opposed to the ISO "pishers."

A few years ago — I believe it was 1993 — Carl had open heart surgery. When I visited him at the hospital, he was bitterly complaining about doctors and the absurdity of their recommendation that he spend time in a nursing home in order to recover. He had too much to do; nobody was going to put him away! Six or seven months later, I got a telephone call from him. He had been to England and he had an accident. But I was not to worry, it was superficial. His face was cut up — he had run into something and had gone over the handlebars while riding a bicycle in Oxford.

His real complaint, however, was that in spite of the operation he was still slowed down, and there didn't seem to be anything the doctors could do about it. I said something about what one could expect when reaching his 90's. He let me know what I could do with my brilliant observation.

In 1996, he had another operation. This time when I took him home, he was really tottering. I saw him a few weeks later when he was still very pale and could only walk a short distance. The conversation turned to our prediction that the left-reformist and centrist groups around the world would increasingly try to form new reformist parties to replace the old discredited organizations. Vesuvius erupted: "I suppose you'll try entryism again!" His step became a little firmer and his complexion reddened a bit. But things didn't look good.

Carl was as vain as the rest of us. He basked in the light of respect younger comrades gave him. Brutally honest as always, he would add that he suspected that "they were honoring me for time served as much as for accomplishments." He bitterly resented those who tried to use him as a "museum piece" while paying no attention to the fact that what he had to say on current matters was still worth listening to.

He told me that he had seen his old factional nemesis, Jim Cannon of the U.S. SWP, before he died. Cannon said how sorry he was to lose a lot of fine workers when the Oehlerites were expelled. Carl was hardly complimented; he felt Cannon had given up on living life and was consoling himself by "posing for history in front of others." Right or wrong, that wasn't Carl's way.

In spite of all the inhuman atrocities around us, and all the times our class has been cast down to the ground, the proletariat keeps rearing up in revolt. One cannot but feel the indomitable will that is also so much a part of the nature of our species — its yearning to live, fight and create in spite of all.

This description fits Carl exactly. I always loved Carl for who he was. I always respected him for his highly individual character — and he was a unique character! In spite of everything, including his very real blemishes and what were in my opinion bad mistakes, he always lived life, fought back and sought to create. He was a true son of our class. ●

LRP Convention Sets Propaganda Group Tasks

The League for the Revolutionary Party held its 1997 national convention in April in New York. Comrades from New York, Chicago and elsewhere participated. As well, a close political associate from Germany and Cde. Leon Caesar of the WIVL of South Africa attended with speaking rights. The sessions covered a variety of topics reflecting the organization's current and planned areas of work.

Our past conventions had produced important leaps forward in our overall political understanding. This convention was designed primarily to advance our organizational development and integration. Its mood was a combination of optimism, confidence and caution.

The optimism came from three factors: 1. Internationally, the working class is mounting a growing mass resistance to the attacks of world capitalism. This upsurge has been tearing apart a number of the international centrist groupings, thus creating greater opportunities for cohering the revolutionary vanguard in important areas of the world. 2. We have succeeded in politically integrating our newer Chicago group with the older New York branch. 3. Our fundamental views of the world have been substantially validated by events.

DANGERS FACING SMALL REVOLUTIONARY GROUPS

The confidence that comes from political clarity can give rise to self-congratulation and sectarian organizational arrogance. It was healthy that cautionary notes were expressed frequently during the convention. Since the LRP arose in a period of working class retreat in the United States, we have remained small. While we have not shrunk or collapsed, as have many other groups, the inescapable fact is that we have been isolated within our class for years.

Trotsky warned his comrades years ago about the dangers that face small groups going through the inevitable stage of cadre preparation — that is, propaganda groups. The perils are qualitatively expanded for those which are isolated from large class struggles in periods of retreat: it is all too easy for them to transform their correct attachment to principles into hidebound formalism and sect behavior. When the period changes, revolutionaries whose political life has been spent holding out against the stream have to be politically and organizationally prepared to jettison that mind-set.

When the direction of events turns, as it is beginning to do now, the danger of a formalist outlook is twofold. A group can petrify into a sectarian fantasy world of motionless abstract ideals. Sitting on its elevated throne, it can try to lecture the fighting proletariat — and when, as is inevitable, the workers reject such pontifical teachings, the group dismisses them as unworthy of its high moralistic standards. Alternatively, seeing mass movement around it, the sectarians quickly adapt, drop all attachment to authentic communist principles and opportunistically try to “get rich quick.”

Our convention was deliberately organized as an arena for the struggle against formalism. This decision derived from our estimate of the situation we are moving into and the consequent need to prepare for upcoming opportunities.

Two non-voting sessions reflected steps we have taken in this effort. One was addressed by Cde. Caesar on the class struggle in his country. Leon pointed out how South African capital, in connivance with international imperialism, has mounted a campaign of “liberalization” that has meant massive assaults on the workers. The WIVL's uncompromising opposition to the ANC-SACP bloc and its anti-working

class attacks has gained them support and recruitment among growing numbers of workers. The convention saw that solidifying the relationship between the LRP and WIVL would be a critical step in building the world vanguard party. Such a hard revolutionary pole would inevitably attract fighting proletarian elements from other areas of the world.

LATINO QUESTION

Another session was devoted to developing a comprehensive understanding of the Latino question in the United States. We have done a considerable amount of work in the fight for Black liberation in the U.S., and in recent years the League has taken major steps to further its understanding of this struggle. As well, we have participated in numerous struggles over defense of the rapidly growing Latino communities in North America; however, we have trailed woefully behind in our overall understanding of Latino politics and the relation of Latinos to the overall U.S. class struggle.

It is clear that the ruling class has increasingly relied on Chicano, Puerto Rican and immigrant Latino labor for much of its increasing superexploitative profit-grubbing. The capitalists have pitted white/Anglo workers against Blacks and Latinos, Black and Latino workers against each other, workers of one Latino nationality against Latino workers of other nationalities, and so forth, in their effort to divide and conquer. The convention explored the growing struggles of Latino and immigrant workers in response to the growing chauvinist attacks. It tried to assess the different kinds of consciousness that seem to be developing among Latino workers and what the future lines of development are likely to be. The discussion was geared to deepening our work in this key sector of the working class.

REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH

The convention addressed our continuing fight to overcome isolation in the U.S. The changing situation affords us greater opportunities. The convention's “U.S. Perspectives” document indicated that now:

There is a tiny and almost ephemeral layer of young working-class people who, nevertheless, are very significant for the class struggle. At the moment it is a question of scattered individuals more than even tiny groups. Mostly but not entirely Black and Latino, they are embracing the idea of revolution. Among them, young immigrants seem the most likely to be initially won.

Our documents noted that given the history of the unions in regard to racism and the scuttling of labor struggles by the bureaucrats, many of the revolutionary-minded youth did not yet see the importance of the trade unions or did not really embrace the class struggle. Therefore our “Tasks” document stated:

We have to fight not only to find revolutionary-minded working class youth and workers, but also to win them to our view on the centrality of the union struggle — that is, the fight against the labor bureaucracy to smash their hold on the unions. That is key to unleashing the power of the working class and therefore to the proletarian revolutionary perspective.

Our comrades and friends left the conference with a sense of accomplishment, tempered with the spirit in which it was held. It was a small step in the long march towards human liberation. ●

COFI/LRP

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part, "you may think that cops are killers but they ain't all bad; one of them could be your brother, one of them could be your dad." 2) A message of solidarity to President Willie James and the Transport Workers Union, saluting the union's militant history — without mentioning that James had signed a miserable workfare agreement in the last contract.

On June 21 we attended a demonstration sponsored by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU) in Philadelphia. Cheri Honkala, head of the KWRU, is on the Labor Party's National Council. The KWRU is affiliated not only to the Labor Party but also to 1199 National Union. Despite all these impressive affiliations, the demo drew an unimpressive total of about 30 people, only one wearing an 1199 hat. Bob Brown, the main speaker from the Labor Party, nevertheless spouted hot air praising both the Labor Party and 1199. For what?

"GIULIANI, OBEY THE LAW"?

The LRP participated in a Workfairness rally on June 26 in New York. Workfairness was boasting about having WEP workers (Work Experience Program — the name for workfare in New York) sign DC37 cards. Rather than just getting WEP workers to sign up, Workfairness should have been pointing out, from the start, that getting real representation from DC37 is going to mean a fight against the bureaucracy.

The demo drew about 40 people tops. After all the DC37 hoopla, we could have expected a rep from the union to speak. But no officials showed up at all. This was particularly disturbing since the demo occurred just a few days after the tragic death of WEP worker Marsha Motipersad, who had been forced to work against medical advice. The main Workfairness slogan at the rally was "Giuliani, Obey the Law!" This was based on a New York judge's ruling in favor of WEP workers getting the prevailing wage. But the mayor appealed the decision immediately and it is likely to be overturned. That doesn't mean that workers shouldn't use legalities to their advantage, but to depend on temporary legal victories is dangerous. Workfare workers are subject to slave wages and slave treatment — thanks to the Clinton-Gingrich welfare reform bill. In the end Giuliani will gladly "obey the law" and use it as a weapon against WEP workers.

This was pointed out by the LRP speaker at the rally, who also warned against relying on bureaucrats like DC37 head Stanley Hill. The Workfairness leaders did not respond.

Sectarian turf warfare prevails among the contending workfare groups, and so a few days later ACORN held a separate demo with about 150 WEP workers. Their theme was union recognition; they demanded that Giuliani recognize *their* union because of the signatures they had accumulated. (Workfairness, prior to its hoped-for honeymoon with Hill, had held similar events with the same demands.)

The ACORN demo was an attempt to bypass working with DC37, although these behind-the-scenes conflicts are never openly discussed. Aside from the ACORN reps, Democratic Congressman Major Owens spoke. He said nothing outside of the usual homilies but was enthusiastically cheered nevertheless. On the other hand, LRPers were harassed by an ACORN organizer for offering *Proletarian Revolution*. The result of the tiff was that more WEP workers asked for it

than usual. We stressed that mass mobilization, not masses of signatures, small public relations maneuvers or Democratic Party speeches is what's needed to force union recognition.

A short while after this round of demos, everything caved in. In early August, the Democrats dropped their opposition to Governor Pataki's workfare bill, the New York adaptation of the Clinton bill; so workfare participants did not get their expected employee status and therefore a clear legal right to unionize. DC37 and Teamsters Local 237 reached an agreement with Giuliani whose main effect was to offer some protection for union workers against replacement but no improvements for WEP workers at all. Despite Hill's earlier announcement of a WEP organizing drive (see PR 53 and 54), WEP workers may sign all the DC37 cards they like, but they won't get permanent jobs at union wages if Hill has anything to do with it.

Due to reformist and left misleadership, the workfare struggle has been temporarily waylaid. But it is still just the beginning. The potential for a fightback following the UPS victory is quite promising. We note that workfare workers at UPS in Chicago, who are nominally members of the Teamsters but typically don't have permanent jobs at union wages, respected the strikers' picket lines. The strike was an opportunity for workfare organizations to both mobilize workfare workers for the UPS picketlines and pose a fight for jobs for all. This wasn't done, but it is clearly part of the way forward for the future.

DETROIT STRIKE EVENTS

This year's Labor Notes Conference, held in Detroit in April, was worse than most of those PR has reported on in the past, in that it took place in the context of the demoralization of the Detroit newspaper strike. At workshops on the question, no one either believed that the upcoming labor march would be of help or was willing to say that the strike had been defeated.

LRPers participated in a number of advance rallies and meetings in New York in preparation for the Detroit Labor March on June 20-21, to which we sent a contingent. Our article in the last issue predicted that Action! Motown had been turned into a bureaucratically-staged funeral for the strike. A number of strikers avidly read our article because it didn't pull punches. For example, we wrote:

We are not on the scene in Detroit, and so we cannot fully gauge the mood of the strikers and the working-class generally at this time. We don't know whether real action is possible on June 20-22. We do know that if there is to be action, it must be not passive "civil disobedience" but massive shows of power at the plants: production must be halted. But we don't argue just for action: revolutionary speakers at the march would use the opportunity to draw sharp lessons exposing the forces that have been arrayed against the necessary action at every point. Above all this means telling the truth about the lies and deceptions of the bureaucrats, nationally and locally. It is guaranteed that the "socialists" in union clothing who get to speak will do nothing of the kind.

We can say, not with any joy, that our article was right on target. The bureaucrats ran the affair as a consolation prize for the defeated strikers, claiming an empty victory all the while.

POLICE BUTALITY

On June 20, LRPers joined a march in support of the

Hostos Community College students who were denied the right to graduate by the Board of Trustees. The students had not passed an English test which the Trustees alleged was required for graduation. Our leaflet for the event (available in English and Spanish) noted that the board was pressing this attack against Spanish-speaking students in order to mount a harsher attack on the public university system (CUNY), in general in the guise of defending standards. The students' legal challenge to the Trustees was upheld by a Supreme Court judge; the Board is appealing that decision.

There were several massive demonstrations against police brutality in the Abner Louima case reported on page 40. At one, on August 16, about 4000 people gathered in the Haitian community in Flatbush near the Rendez-Vous nightclub where it all started. The most popular chant that day, in Creole, was "Koupe Tet, Boule Kay!" (Cut Heads, Burn Houses!) — a slogan from the Haitian slave revolution 200 years ago. In this spirit, people took the LRP's revolutionary leaflet with real interest.

At this rally, the podium was not dominated by Democratic politicians, and all participating groups were welcome to speak. Our speaker started with the Creole slogan, "Yon sel Solisyon — Revolisyon Sosyalis Twavaye!" (Only One Solution — Workers' Socialist Revolution!). Agreeing with previous speakers who said that the cops were racist because they protect the racist capitalist system, he stressed the need for mass self-defense. He noted that the Transport Workers Union (TWU) alone had 32,000 members with the power to shut the whole city down. Imagine the mass self-defense the TWU could organize if it wanted! But the current union leadership will not do any such thing because they support the cops and the cop's bosses, the capitalists, and their Democratic and Republican parties. So the fight for working-class armed self-defense means exposing and ousting the pro-capitalist union leaders and building the revolutionary party.

The LRP was also active in the march of 10,000 people across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall on August 29. This was also spirited and militant. "No Justice, No Peace" and "70th, Shut It Down!" were among the more popular chants. The focus of our intervention was distributing the leaflet reproduced in this issue and discussing those ideas with interested demonstrators. When ex-Mayor David Dinkins, who had expanded the racist police force during his term, proclaimed from the platform that "the overwhelming majority of the 38,000 officers on the force are good, honest men," an audible groan came from the crowd.

REVOLUTIONARY CAMPAIGN IN TRANSIT

Our last issue carried the campaign statement by Eric Josephson, a revolutionary worker running for an Executive Board position in TWU Local 100 in New York. Eric has not only used his campaign to familiarize broader numbers of workers with the revolutionary socialist viewpoint; he has fought for specific actions to forward the struggle.

For example, Local President Willie James, who is running for re-election, held a May 1 demonstration against excessive discipline by transit bosses to boost his own image rather than as a kickoff to a real fightback. A leaflet explaining the reality was distributed. He also released a statement which exposes the leadership's latest "pension improvement" campaign as an election ploy. (See PR 50 for background.) During the UPS strike Eric put out a leaflet urging a TWU mobilization at the UPS picket lines and addressing the importance of the UPS strike. As he put it:

The UPS workers' victory beats the hell out of the terrible defeats and givebacks that the Hall/James gang brought without even a fight. While the UPS workers won real, if small gains for their part-timers, the Hall/James gang are the authors of the most heinous low-wage (actually no-wage!) part-time scheme yet — the welfare forced-labor scheme in our current contract. And remember: they rammed it down our throats by telling us that these days unions can't dare to strike.

NABET-CWA MARCHES AGAINST DISNEY-ABC

Members of NABET-CWA, the National Alliance of Broadcasting Engineers and Technicians, who work for ABC, now part of the Walt Disney conglomerate, have been without a contract since March. On May 15 about 900 workers marched from the Disney store on Fifth Avenue to Disney's newly acquired New Amsterdam Theater on 42nd Street.

The spirited rally unfortunately degenerated into a small civil disobedience action, with about 15 people blocking the theater entrance and getting arrested. The LRPers immediately started the chant "Let's all go," and agitated among the workers near us for the idea of a mass action. This caught on a bit but not enough, since preparations for such action had not been laid out. The ISO, which had a big contingent at the march and could have made a decisive intervention, didn't even try.

On June 14, the Disney company took over midtown Manhattan for a parade celebrating the *Hercules* film premiere. Mayor Giuliani was the cheerleader, and several thousand cops were on hand to give the feel of a mini-police state. There were two counterdemos scheduled: one by the NABET-CWA workers; the second by the Haiti Anti-Intervention Committee (HAIC), which has been conducting ongoing protests against Haitian sweatshops operated by the likes of Disney and Nike.

The LRP played an aggressive role in convincing many participants at the HAIC rally, including the ISO, to merge with the larger NABET-CWA demonstration. This was a militant demo: many workers were very bitter against Disney/ABC not only about the contract but also because of the many layoffs that had occurred, coupled with a lot of overtime forced on the remaining workforce.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

As in past years, the LRP attended the Fête run by the Lutte Ouvrière organization in mid-May outside Paris. Lutte Ouvrière (LO: Workers' Struggle) calls itself Trotskyist and is the largest French organization to the left of the Communist Party; they have perhaps 4-5000 members and a vastly greater periphery. In the 1995 presidential elections their perennial candidate, Arlette Laguiller, received 1,600,000 votes, almost 5 percent of the total. Their annual Fête combines a sort of county fair — rides, games, concerts — with open political debates and literature stands for almost any left-wing group that asks to attend.

This year, the Fête's background was the national Parliamentary election campaign, in which LO was contesting about half the seats. (LO did much worse than their previous showing.) The major issues in the election were immigration — especially from Africa, the European Monetary Union, and unemployment. LO woodenly stated that the first two issues were just bourgeois attempts to divide the working class: the only important issue was unemployment, solvable by the requisition of the major privately-owned companies. LO

said that working-class mass action beyond politics as usual would be necessary to win this demand. Their election literature, however, did not explain this last point further.

The number of groups with booths at the Fête was smaller than the year before, testimony to the continuing collapse of the international "Trotskyist" left in the wake of Stalinism's downfall. Almost all the groups were looking to capitulate to Tony Blair's "New Labor" government in Britain, the newly victorious Socialist-Communist-Green coalition in France or the Socialist Labor Party, Arthur Scargill's left social-democratic sect in Britain. (PR is planning an article soon on the European political scene.)

The LRP presented a forum on Welfare "Reform" in the U.S. All the groups in attendance, mostly from Germany and Britain, seemed to agree with our point of view. So the debate turned to the not-closely-related question of the class nature of the former Soviet Union, which most self-styled Trotskyist tendencies still feel was a degenerated workers' state to the end — whenever that was or will be.

On June 10, an LRPer participated in a demonstration in Paris of nearly 100,000 marchers from all over France and almost every union federation. The day prior, French truckers had clogged Paris traffic and blocked the borders with Spain, Germany and Switzerland, joined by similar actions by truckers in the surrounding countries, as well as Spanish truckers blocking some crossings with Portugal. The main slogan of the demo was "32 hours for full pay for full employment."

The 32 hours slogan was echoed at the "EuroMarch" in Amsterdam a few days later. About 30,000 people showed up; perhaps left organizations were in the majority, although many French, German and Dutch union federations were present. Our comrade made a dent at the march when the popular slogan, "El Pueblo Unido Jamas Sera Vencido" (the people united will never be defeated), was taken up by marchers of all nationalities. He led many to change the chant to "Los Obreros Unidos . . ." (the workers united . . .), in order to get across the idea that the fundamental question is class against class, not "the people" in general. Many participants seemed surprised but pleased to find out that there were open communists in the United States.

AUSTRALIA

The class struggle is on the rise again in Australia. The conservative Liberal-National Party coalition government has escalated attacks on the working class. It recently introduced new industrial relations laws which attack Australia's still powerful unions, including attacking previous fixes on wages, working conditions and job security, and limiting the ability of unions to organize in the workplace.

So far the union leaders have looked to avoid using mass struggle to defeat these laws, preferring to encourage support for the bourgeois Labor Party. But workers in the state of

Western Australia succeeded in forcing the unions to call a one day general strike in conjunction with a blockade of the state by the national unions. The state was brought to a standstill, but the union leaders promptly ended the struggle by making a compromise deal with the government and telling workers to hope that the Labor Party and the Democrats stop the new laws in parliament.

When a mining company tried to take advantage of the new laws to smash the workers' union by placing workers on individual contracts, the miners went on strike. Although a very small number of scabs and management tried to keep the mine operating, the strikers effectively shut the mine down with a militant picket line. But, scared that the strikers' militancy would inspire similar struggles by other workers, the union leaders imposed a three-week cooling off period during which they will try to negotiate a deal with the company.

Now another front is opening in the class war that the government is leading. Prime Minister Howard has made public statements attacking the waterfront workers and their union. The national union leadership has promised a massive defense campaign, but the union bureaucrats' record warns against leaving the struggle under their control.

Like everywhere else, accompanying the capitalists' attacks on the whole working class are their attempts at escalating racism to divide the working class. The government has led the way, appealing to Australian nationalism while passing anti-immigrant laws, cutting aid to Aboriginal peoples and immigrants and attacking land rights previously won by Aboriginals. This has only encouraged the most reactionary racists, like parliamentarian Pauline Hanson and her new, openly racist, One Nation party.

But while Hanson's support has grown, she has also been met with a strong counterattack by mass, multi-racial demonstrations of workers and leftists. These demonstrations have succeeded in shutting down her meetings in many cities across the country. At meetings to organize anti-Hanson rallies, LRP/COFI supporter George Patts has consistently opposed the pacifist and non-interventionist policies of the likes of the Democratic Socialist Party. He has argued for the need to prevent Hansonites from speaking and to shut down One Nation meetings when ever possible with large, militant protest rallies. ●

CORRECTION

In the COFI/LRP report in PR 54, we wrongly stated that a strike at Booth Memorial Hospital in New York "had just begun as we go to press." In fact the conflict was settled at the last minute without a strike, reportedly in large part because of a strong vote in favor of a sympathy strike by other 1199 nurses.

I Would Like More Information About the LRP/COFI

Name

Address

Send to: League for the Revolutionary Party
P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008-3573

Documents in Spanish Available

The LRP has a variety of materials available in Spanish and will have more in the near future. These include several leaflets and the COFI Political Resolution. If you would like to be on our mailing list for Spanish material, please send in a request to LRP, P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008.

LRP Debates Rank-and-Filist WoVo

On June 21 in Detroit, the LRP participated in a debate organized by the Workers Voice group (which calls itself "WoVo") on the topic "Building a Working-Class Alternative Today." The Detroit encounter was to be the first of four between our two organizations. But after its sorry performance, WoVo chose to drop out of the remaining debates.

The Detroit debate took place on the evening of the "Action! Motown" march, a misnamed event that predictably proved to be not a culmination of actions to turn around the defeat suffered by the striking Detroit newspaper workers, but a funeral march for the strike. Nor was it a real Motown event — Detroit's mainly Black working class sat this one out. Responsibility for the strike's defeat lies with the local and national union bureaucracy, including Teamster president Carey and AFL-CIO head Sweeney, who knifed the strike in the back at several key junctures. WoVo too criticized the strike leadership, but the debate showed they had no alternative for winning such a crucial class battle.

LIMITS OF RANK-AND-FILISM

The debate was completely one-sided. Against the LRP's arguments on the centrality of fighting for the revolutionary party and for advanced proletarian consciousness, WoVo emphasized militant trade unionism and rank-and-filism. In the discussion it became clear that WoVo didn't understand the ABC's of the Marxist method. They objected, for example, to the LRP's use of the term "backward consciousness" to describe the limits of trade unionism in the Detroit strike. After all, if only 11 percent of U.S. workers are in unions, they must be the advanced elements. Besides, said WoVo, many newspaper workers joined the new Labor Party.

As LRPers at the debate explained, Leninists have always understood that trade unionist consciousness in itself is still caught up in bourgeois consciousness, reflecting the limited, sectoral role of trade unions in capitalist society. The task of the revolutionary party is to show that workers' interests are international, extending to the entire working class and oppressed people's of the world. WoVo's position blurs the distinction between militant unionism and revolutionary consciousness.

As for the "Labor Party," contrary to the illusions of some would-be Trotskyist organizations like WoVo, this outfit has nothing to do with advanced, much less revolutionary, class consciousness. We had predicted from the start that this pseudo-party led by OCAW officials Tony Mazzocchi and Bob Wages was a dead-end for class struggle; not only would it not fight for workers to break from the labor bureaucrats' beloved Democrats, but it would evade any mass struggle that threatened the Democrats' electability. (See the LRP pamphlet, *The New Labor Party: Democratic Party Advocates?*)

The LRP speaker argued that WoVo's strategy in the trade unions is to call for militant rank-and-file caucuses rather than revolutionary party leadership. This opens them to adapting to left bureaucratic currents, as evidenced by their orientation to the Labor Party and their soft approach to reformist "rank-and-filist" formations like New Directions in the UAW and TDU in the Teamsters.

WoVo denied at the debate that their notion of rank-and-file caucuses had anything to do with these reformist formations. But their press says the opposite:

Within particular unions there exist rank-and-file cau-

ces, most notably in the Teamsters and the UAW (Teamsters for a Democratic Union and New Directions, respectively.) These caucuses' existence is an affirmation of the growing sentiment within the rank-and-file for a new fighting leadership. While we recognize that these caucuses struggle in the face of tremendous intimidation, we feel that they can be the first to begin the process of politicizing the struggle by linking labor struggles to the fight for the labor party. (*International Trotskyist* No. 6, 1992.)

Instead of denouncing the reformist character of the TDU and ND leaderships, WoVo criticizes them for failing to extend their reformism to the political field — their problem is that they have not linked up with the Labor Party!

WoVo's debaters also showed that they knew next to nothing about the LRP's politics, activities or history. Relying on potshots rather than analysis, they asserted repeatedly that "the LRP just stands on the sidelines and screams for revolution" — even though our speakers and our press (which they apparently hadn't read) discussed our 20 years of trade union work in detail. Curiously, for all their bluster, they had very little to say about their own union work.

LESSONS OF DETROIT

WoVo's rank-and-filism had little to offer the newspaper strike. Unlike most strikes, there was a good deal of rank-and-file activity in Detroit. The key problem was not any lack of rank-and-file militancy but the lack of a leadership with a strategy to break out from the bureaucratic stranglehold that has squashed union struggles for decades. Militant unionism in a strike by a relatively aristocratic layer of workers did not address the key task of directing the struggle to the more oppressed, revolutionary-minded Black workers of Detroit. (See "Detroit Left Strikes Out" in *PR* 51.)

Lacking a clear strategy to win, the militants never fought for leadership of the strike, even when the union tops sabotaged the struggle by calling off the militant mass actions that had attempted to shut down the plants. Time and again the "rank-and-filists" went along with the official leaders, even accepting the unconditional surrender initiated by Carey in February. They failed to recognize that winning the strike meant defeating both the local and national leaders who betrayed it at every turn. Instead, they clung to the illusions that they could pressure the leadership. When the local leaders revealed themselves as hopeless, the militants' illusions transferred to Carey, Sweeney and others. This too proved futile. But, seeing no alternative, they held their noses and buried their criticisms in order to gain paper endorsements and material aid. (See *PR* 54.)

As a political concept, the rank-and-filist approach of WoVo and other leftists debases the struggle for revolutionary leadership and class consciousness. Rank-and-filism suggests that the workers' problems are organizational and that the solution is simply union democracy. Rather than offering leadership that understands the union bureaucrats' capitulation to capitalism — that is, revolutionary leadership — the rank-and-filist approach adapts to backward consciousness within the working class. It reflects what the leftists and other leaders think is acceptable to the ranks — not what is needed to win.

To drive the point home, the LRP speaker cited an attack on the Communist Party's rank-and-filism in the 1930's

by James Cannon, then the leader of American Trotskyism: The chatter about "rank-and-file leadership" is a disgrace for communists. Such horseplay can very well be left to the confusionists of syndicalism who object to the idea of a workers' political party on the grounds that the masses need no leaders. This demoralizing nonsense only hampers the organization of the working class and thus serves the bourgeoisie. The mission of the communists is to educate the workers, not to muddle and confuse them; to aspire, frankly, to lead them in their struggle, not to trail behind them and cater to ignorance and prejudice with demagogic slogans. (*The Communist League of America, 1932-34.*)

THE LABOR PARTY'S ROLE

WoVo's rank-and-filism was evident in their adaptation to the bureaucratic and reformist Labor Party. Given that Detroit is a center of WoVo activity, they should know better than to point to strikers' interest in the Labor Party as a sign that they were advancing towards a classwide perspective. In fact, this says exactly the opposite. A classwide fight meant challenging Sweeney, Carey & Co., something the bureaucrats who lead the LP strictly forbid.

This was amply proved by the slimy role of the Labor Party leadership in brokering the AFL-CIO's endorsement of Action Motown! Despite the motion adopted at the Labor Party's founding convention in June 1996 to support the strikers' call for a national march in Detroit, Mazzocchi and Wages did little to push the effort — for that would have meant challenging Sweeney. At a time when serious pressure could have made some difference, the LP leaders allowed Sweeney to get away with opposing the march. Instead, on Labor Day 1996, a handful of LPers joined Sweeney in a pathetic substitute for the mass action that was needed. Only after the strike was called off did the deal for a too-little, too-late national march go down. The LP leaders helped sell the sellout by touting the march as a consolation prize.

Identification with Mazzocchi's bureaucratic, do-nothing Labor Party under these conditions was no step forward toward a perspective of mass action. It represented the backward tendencies of even more militant strikers to compromise and accept the betrayals of their leaders out of desperation for any kind of support.

Even though WoVo criticized the LP bureaucrats, it learned nothing about the errors of rank-and-filism from the Detroit strike. If nothing else, the strike showed that rank-and-filism as practiced by the various left groups is a recipe for maneuverism and lying to workers. Borrowing methods from the bureaucrats they claim to detest, leftist apologists fell over themselves praising the LP leadership instead of denouncing its betrayals. Many of them remained silent about Carey's rotten role and the disappearing act by the TDU in Detroit. And they hid the truth about the defeat of the strike and Sweeney and Carey's funeral march on June 21, cruelly stringing along strikers and fellow workers.

WOVO QUILTS

Soundly thrashed in the debate, WoVo chose to abandon further combat with LRP. WoVo's letter cancelling the remaining three debates (which *they* had proposed) covers their retreat with infantile left posturing.

We have made this decision as a result of the method, program, and overall outlook expressed by the LRP during the debate in Detroit. In a nutshell we would characterize the method as mechanical and idealistic, the program as

right centrist, and the outlook as thoroughly petty-bourgeois, completely devoid of any understanding of the conditions and contradictions of the working class today or how to interact with workers under these conditions to win them to revolutionary socialist politics.

WoVo made no attempt to provide any evidence for these charges, either at the debate or in their letter — no citation from LRP writings, no criticism of our activities, no clue about what we said at the debate that revealed something they couldn't have known in advance. They promised to provide "a full analysis of the LRP's program and method" in the next issue of their journal. That, they hope, gives them time to come up with some rationalization.

WoVo's excuses reached absurdity when they justified quitting on the grounds that their "those we work with on a daily basis in Detroit" failed to show up for the first debate — because they "were not interested in seeing yet another petty-bourgeois left-fest." That is, WoVo says it's *our* fault that *their* contacts stayed home! As we replied to WoVo:

This excuse too is bullshit: your contacts were absent not only from the debate but also from the labor march . . .

For all the faults of the march and its organizers, it was neither petty-bourgeois in your sense nor left in any sense.

We also pointed to the real reason WoVo wants to avoid further combat with the LRP: they were not only politically defeated as claimants to the heritage of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky — they were embarrassed by their inexcusable lack of preparation. Moreover, WoVo behaved in an amateurish, un-serious manner, virtually sabotaging their own meeting. Not only was the event poorly organized, but WoVo members arrived long after the scheduled starting time — the comrade assigned to chair the meeting showed up an hour and a half late! Given this sorry showing, for all their proletarian pretensions, they took the easy way out and quit. (Copies of WoVo's letter and our response are available on request.)

Despite WoVo's sad performance and attempt to blame us for their retreat, the LRP responded by challenging them to stick to their word and defend their "orthodox Trotskyist" position on the question of Stalinism. We wrote:

For our part, we think there is still something to be gained from debating. We are confident of our views: they are grounded in well documented experience in the unions and the class struggle in general. . . . As followers of Lenin and Trotsky we know that we benefit from sharpening our focus in political combat. . . .

So we challenge you to fulfill at least part of what you agreed to. We propose one more debate — on the class nature of the USSR, the other Stalinist states and their present-day descendants. This topic obviously has central implications for international political work in today's world; it embodies the clearest political differences between us; and both of our organizations have given these questions considerable attention. Such a debate could take place in either Chicago or New York: your choice, date to be arranged at your convenience. This time, we will take responsibility for all the necessary arrangements.

At Detroit, you commended us for our willingness to debate and criticized the Spartacists for continually backing away from debate challenges. So how about giving up your whining workerism and sticking to your word? Otherwise you prove yourself to be the cowards your letter suggests.

No reply from WoVo has been received. They evidently prefer to forget the whole thing.●

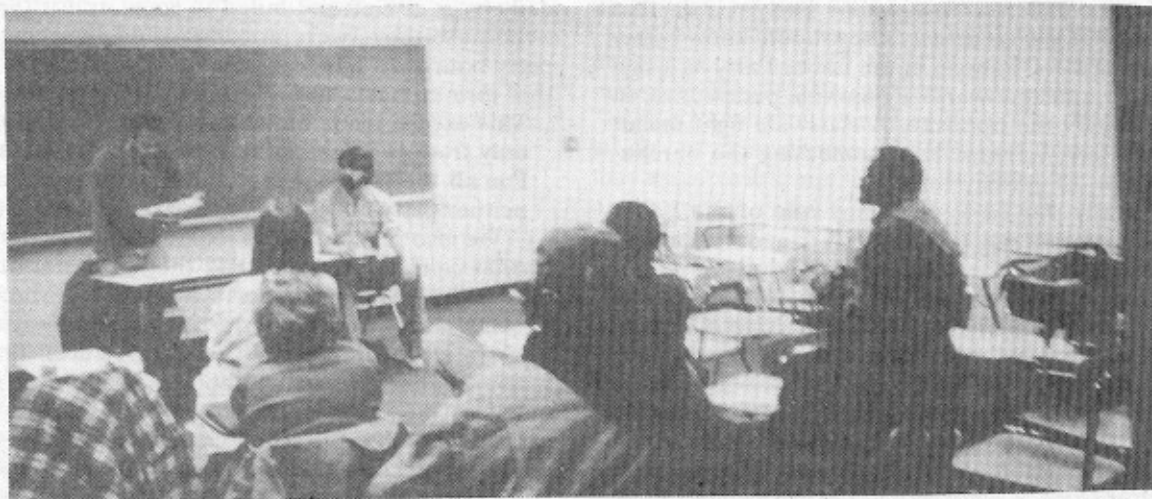
South African Revolutionary Tours U.S.

This past April and May, the LRP sponsored a tour of the United States by Leon Caesar, National Secretary of the Workers International Vanguard League of South Africa (WIVL). (Recent issues of *Proletarian Revolution* have featured political documents of this group.) Through public meetings and other events, this tour allowed the working-class and radical public to learn more about the class struggle in South Africa in general and the WIVL in particular.

A central purpose of the trip was to continue discussions between the LRP and WIVL, to examine the extent of our agreement on major political questions. Cde. Leon was also able to examine our organization "up close," as we have

people outside the organized left attended, confirming that interest in the struggles of the South African masses has declined significantly since the rise to power of the ANC. Many have been fooled into thinking that the harsh conditions of the apartheid days are over. The coming mass struggles in South Africa will show otherwise.

The poor attendance meant that the discussion periods were taken up mostly by members of left groups, in particular the Spartacist League. This could have been a useful means to clarify many questions of the South African struggle. But as we describe in a separate article (p. 33), the Spartacists' method is to avoid real issues by slandering its opponents.



Leon Caesar speaking at New York's City College.

done with the WIVL through visits to South Africa. The point of these and forthcoming discussions is to determine if unity is possible between our two groups.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA

At public meetings in New York and Chicago, Cde. Caesar described how little has changed for the working people in South Africa since the election of the Mandela government. Far from governing in the interests of the masses, the African National Congress (ANC) supports capitalism and does the bidding of the same capitalists who oppressed and exploited the masses under apartheid. The right to vote that the masses fought for and won has not put roofs over their head or food on their table.

The workers were often promised by the ANC that their struggle would build socialism. Now more and more workers are rejecting the ANC, but they maintain their goal of socialism and are looking for a way forward in their struggle. Cde. Caesar explained that many are taking increasing notice of the WIVL because it alone has combined an uncompromising struggle for the independence of the working class from the ANC with consistent arguments for the need for the working class to build a revolutionary party. Meanwhile, the other far left groups in South Africa are in crisis and are losing members and the little influence they had in the past — because they have compromised on these questions.

Despite the international importance of these matters, attendance at most of Cde. Leon's meetings was disappointing. In spite of significant publicity efforts, only a handful of

Initially, at his New York forum, Cde. Leon was obviously taken aback by this behavior: such outright dishonesty is foreign to the far left in South Africa, under the pressure of the powerful, socialist-minded workers' movement. But at the Chicago forum he joined the LRP in exposing the Spartacists with factual and political refutations.

Much more successful were several smaller meetings arranged with groups of workers and youth. At City College in New York, about twenty mostly young Black and Latino working-class students came to hear Cde. Caesar and participated in lively discussion. In Baltimore, in meetings organized by a friend of the LRP in that city, Cde. Leon was able to talk to a group of unemployed workers about his experience in leading the Western Cape unemployed workers movement during the days of the anti-apartheid struggle. As well, in Chicago he participated in a lengthy radio interview to explain many of the issues of the South African struggle. He also gave a lengthy interview that has been published in Germany.

LRP/WIVL RELATIONS

The LRP has always been confident that the working-class struggle would generate other authentically revolutionary organizations around the world. There are bound to be political differences among such groups: we never expected to create LRP clones or groups that would robotically accept our line, since such parties will never lead revolutions. We have also expected that we would unify with revolutionary groups provided that we reached firm agreement with them

on principles and the strategy for world revolution. This is the spirit in which the LRP and WIVL have entered into our joint discussions.

As described in previous issues of *PR*, the key strategic questions in the South African class struggle have been the independence of the working class from the ANC and the struggle for revolutionary party leadership against the ANC/SACP bureaucracy that controls the workers' mass organizations. The WIVL is the only group in South Africa to have fought for these positions, and it has done much more. Its members were part of the workers' movement during the anti-apartheid struggle but were cut off from international left-wing currents during the apartheid years. In the recent period the WIVL comrades fought against the negotiations between the ANC and the apartheid government, and ran revolutionary campaigns in the first post-apartheid elections in 1994 and in local government elections in 1996. (*PR* 47 and 53.)

As the comrades were developing these positions, they joined an international political tendency, the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (WIRFI). Headed by Cliff Slaughter's Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain, the WIRFI has a rotten political history of betraying the interests of the working class. When the WIVL comrades saw that their revolutionary politics were incompatible with the WIRFI, they launched an extensive political struggle against it, developing revolutionary positions on certain key questions of the world class struggle. (See *PR* 00.) Unfortunately, the vacuous way the WIRFI handled the faction fight meant that the South African comrades did not use the clash to work out their views on all the important issues.

POLITICAL DIFFERENCES

The revolutionary character of the WIVL has further been confirmed through our preliminary discussions and practical collaboration, and by seeing their relation to their fellow workers and their reputation in the South African working class. While the LRP has never had the chance to be as directly tested by big events of the class struggle as the WIVL has been in South Africa, the WIVL's study of our views and activities, and our interaction with them, have led them also to regard us as genuine revolutionaries.

Nonetheless, the LRP and WIVL remain completely independent organizations. One reason is that a number of important political differences exist between us, notably on the nature of Stalinism, the strategy and tactics of the anti-racist struggle, and important organizational questions. Preliminary examination of these problems was the focus of our discussions during Cde. Caesar's stay in the U.S.

While the WIVL has serious disagreements with our theory of Stalinism, they are still in the process of developing their own understanding. They have rejected the "degenerated and deformed workers' state theory" as incompatible with Trotskyism, especially in the light of its failure to foresee or explain the transformations that have taken place in Russia, China and Eastern Europe. Importantly, we agree on rejecting the idea that Stalinism could play a progressive historical role. As well, we do not seem to disagree on any of the key practical questions posed by the struggle during the collapse of Stalinism: opposition to Western intervention, the defense of the masses against the Stalinists and the defense of nationalized property against privatization. In-depth discussions of this question are planned for the future, as the WIVL develops its position further.

On the anti-racist struggle, the LRP holds that while race is a biological fiction, it is often a social reality. This is a result of capitalism's inherent racial oppression designed to isolate Blacks (and others) in the U.S. and elsewhere, in order to divide the working class and promote superexploitation. Our "proletarian interracialism" is analogous to internationalism; we advocate working-class unity across and against racial divisions, along with the right of self-organization of oppressed people as a tactic toward that end.

The WIVL, like many on the South African left, advocates "non-racialism," which, to the extent that we understand it, asserts not only that race has no biological reality but also that acknowledging any racial social reality feeds the fires of racism. They oppose any organization of oppressed people distinct from their fellow workers of other races.

Both groups can see that these different approaches arise at least in part from the very different conditions under which racism has developed in our different countries. We in the LRP understand why a concept like non-racialism has taken hold among revolutionaries in South Africa. Since

South African Workers' Library Book Fund

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blacks are an overwhelming majority of the population, self-organization is unnecessary, and revolutionary-minded black workers are sick of middle-class radical demagogues who try to whip them up on racial grounds and divert them from their real struggle for equality and socialism.

In the U.S., however, Black workers, while participating in the overall class struggle, are part of a specially oppressed minority that historically has never been able to depend on class unity for its defense, and therefore many often see the need to defend themselves as such.

Overall, we have reason to believe that the political differences we have with the WIVL are not of a principled or hardened character. We hope that our discussions will bring us toward further agreement.

CRITIQUE OF LRP WORK

Comrade Caesar attended the LRP's national convention in April. He was able to study our organization's political and organizational perspectives documents and join in the discussions that shaped them. In this way he could judge the political ideas and activities of the LRP, and we were able to benefit from his contributions. One disagreement arose over the LRP's conception of itself as a "propaganda group." It appeared that Cde. Leon was overestimating the possibility of revolutionary mass activity in the U.S. at this time, at the expense of the patient work of building a revolutionary cadre. It also appears to us that the WIVL and LRP have important differences over how to build a vanguard cadre organization.

WIVL Calls for Discussion of Fourth International

Shortly before Comrade Caesar's visit to the United States, the WIVL issued a document entitled "Call for Discussion on the Process Towards Forming an International Preparatory Committee" for the Fourth International. The document has been circulated internationally, and copies of it are available from the LRP on request.

The WIVL sees great working-class struggles about to erupt internationally and poses the need for an international revolutionary socialist party to fight for the leadership of these struggles. The document is addressed to socialist groups and individuals and calls on them to discuss the question of rebuilding the Fourth International, the world party founded by Leon Trotsky in the 1930's.

The WIVL says that through this call it is attempting to forge an independent and genuine way forward toward rebuilding the F.I. — as opposed to the methods of what it labels as the "international Trotskyist movement," which it says is beset by "sectarianism, centrism, revisionism and opportunism." The WIVL also points out that attempts at regroupment by such groups are often based on taking "an opportunity to discard crucial Marxist principles" in return for quick organizational gains.

Against these examples, the WIVL invites "like-minded revolutionaries to join us in forming an International Preparatory Committee to take forward the task of rebuilding the Fourth International." It sees four "aspects" to this task:

1. Expounding the theoretical and philosophical bases of the Fourth International, and applying these to the unfolding world situation;

2. The building of genuine revolutionary parties (not petty-bourgeois sectarian groups), that will have as one of its most important tasks the rebuilding of the Fourth

International; But only future discussions will determine the exact content and significance of these matters.

Working-class interests demand the most unified and centralized international revolutionary political leadership. There is no excuse for revolutionary groups with tested political agreement remaining apart. It will be an important step toward the re-creation of the Fourth International if further discussions and cooperative work with the WIVL lead to fundamental agreement and therefore to our unification into a common political tendency. Such unity will appeal to groups around the world who are being forced to explore and rethink their views as a result of the major class explosions now in the works.

But unity is a long way off and by no means certain. The history of those groups calling themselves Trotskyist is littered with examples of groups coming together by denying basic differences. Inevitably, these fusions split again. The working class needs a centralized international it has confidence in. This can only be achieved by patiently investigating and testing the level of agreement between groups through discussions and common work. This is all the more important when the very foundations of an international are being laid. The LRP and WIVL are only just beginning this process and are committed to a period of testing. Since we are aware of how fast the coming international struggles will develop, we will waste no time in pursuing our joint work. Both groups agree that it is crucial to open the discussion process to other revolutionary-minded groups around the world.●

International;

3. The Fourth International will be rebuilt in revolutionary class action; and

4. Politically defeating the centrist Trotskyist organizations ... as well as ... all other groups that the working class has illusions in that are obstacles to the socialist revolution.

"We see the steps toward the formation of a Preparatory Committee," the WIVL concludes, "as engaging interested groups, sharing documents, joint practical work, and discussing each other's political history."

LRP CRITICISM OF WIVL DOCUMENT

The LRP welcomes the opportunity to discuss the idea of a Preparatory Committee for the Fourth International with the WIVL. In its document, the WIVL shows its commitment to genuine internationalism and makes some correct points about the pseudo-Trotskyist groups. A product of the great class struggles of the South African working class, it disproves the myth that initiatives in international politics must come from offices in New York, London or other imperial centers.

However, we believe that the document is seriously flawed: it is politically disorienting and at times simply confusing. We limit ourselves here to only the most important questions.

First, the title of the document qualifies its idea of a preparatory committee for the Fourth International by saying that it is only a "call for discussion on the process towards forming" such a committee. But the text gives a far more immediate and definite impression: it "invites like-minded revolutionaries to join us in forming an International Preparatory Committee." Only later do we read that there

are preliminary but vague steps towards forming a Committee, including "sharing documents, joint practical work, and discussing ... [the] political history" of interested groups. Many readers will be left thinking that the WIVL doesn't know exactly what it is calling for.

However, beneath this confusion are more substantial errors. The starting point for any discussion of rebuilding the Fourth International is the fact that numerous groups already claim to represent Trotskyism and the F.I.; many are themselves calling for similar-sounding discussions. The question arises, then, how is the WIVL's call different from the others? The WIVL document recognizes the problem but fails to answer it. It simply observes:

Our approach to rebuilding the Fourth International differs vastly from that of the centrists. For the latter the call is on the one hand a reflection of their sectarianism — a means to show that they are the true heirs to the Fourth International. ... They have no prospect for rebuilding the Fourth International other than criticizing each other, or shall we say competing with each other over the same market, and the hope that their numbers will grow until they automatically become the Fourth International. This does not exclude a few regroupments. However, the few that manage to grow, inevitably end up in splits and more splits, with the hope of them forming the Fourth International receding more and more, and in fact becoming a mystical entity.

While this is an accurate characterization of the centrists, the WIVL's document doesn't distinguish itself from such elements. The assertion that they really want to build the Fourth International in the working class is not in itself convincing. The fake Trotskyist groups will only be defeated when revolutionaries expose them in the course of participating with fellow workers in common struggle. The most essential weapon in this struggle is a sharp programmatic counterposition of revolutionary policies against opportunist and sectarian ones — the prerequisite for any organizational steps toward re-creating the Fourth International.

Instead, the WIVL document puts organizational considerations ahead of advancing even the beginnings of a political foundation. While the WIVL states that the Preparatory Committee would be "united by a political and theoretical platform", the document offers not even one plank of such a platform. The only concrete suggestions made are organizational: e.g., what practical tasks the committee will have. This is putting the cart before the horse. It expresses a weakness we have seen in other WIVL documents: a tendency to think tactically before addressing questions of strategy and principle.

By connecting its organizational proposals to a vague political statement open to many interpretations, the WIVL could attract those who see such weaknesses as positive — precisely the groups the WIVL condemns for seeing regroupment as an "opportunity to discard crucial Marxist principles". More importantly, by not posing a political alternative to the centrist pseudo-Trotskyists, the WIVL misses an opportunity to attract those elements genuinely interested in building revolutionary parties on the basis of genuine Trotskyist politics.

A PROGRAM OF BASIC REVOLUTIONARY POSITIONS

The LRP believes that all the well-known "Trotskyist" groups have proven to be barriers to the building of the world party of socialist revolution. The WIVL believes the

same and their document pointed to the need to "defeat the centrist Trotskyist organizations." But then a call for forming a committee for the Fourth International must be directed *against* these groups politically, and toward those, both within and independent of the "Trotskyist" organizations, who are moving toward genuine revolutionary politics.

To do this it is necessary to advance a series of basic revolutionary positions which expose the hardened centrist groups. This was the method used by Lenin and Trotsky in separating out the groups interested in building the Third and Fourth Internationals. Such a platform would not yet be the program of a new organization (which would certainly be premature), but would indicate positions considered necessary for genuine Trotskyists and promote a discussion of them.

The LRP hopes to propose such a programmatic statement in the near future. But the WIVL could have made a start rather than leave the question of program unanswered. Even though the WIVL is still developing its own program, it still could have counterposed the revolutionary positions it already has on a selection of the most important issues. For example:

- The need to fight for a revolutionary party at all times — as against proposing mass reformist parties or "militant" reformist groups in the unions as necessary stages in the struggle. The WIVL has opposed such developments in South Africa (like the reformist Workers List Party) and argued against the WRP's liquidation into a movement for a new reformist party in Britain.

- The strategy of permanent revolution: the democratic needs of the masses can only be secured by the seizure of state power by the working class led by a revolutionary party and spread worldwide through socialist revolution. Thus the WIVL opposes those who have argued that petty-bourgeois nationalist parties like the ANC could be supported or pushed to overthrow capitalism.

- Opposition to popular frontism. The WIVL formulated their opposition to it when they stood out against voting for the ANC in South Africa and similar situations.

- The struggle against Stalinism. Even though the WIVL has not yet adopted a theoretical position on the nature of Stalinism, it has made clear the need to defend the masses from the Stalinist attacks as in the 1991 Moscow coup and the 1980-81 workers' movement in Poland. It has also opposed the privatization campaigns by Stalinist rulers and their bourgeois allies.

By raising these positions the WIVL could have begun to separate itself from the centrist left and indicated what sort of positions are necessary for any group claiming to be genuine Trotskyists. These positions alone would serve to expose many fake-Trotskyist groups and begin to attract the better elements. Then serious discussions between groups could be conducted, aimed at clarifying political positions in the key class struggles around the world. Soon the LRP will complete a more detailed response to the WIVL document, including a proposed minimum program for discussions on building the Fourth International, and suggestions as to how to pursue investigating and testing the political agreement between organizations.

Despite our differences with the WIVL's document, the LRP responds positively to the WIVL's call for discussion, because we know the political strengths and clarity the WIVL have already established. We encourage others to study the full range of documents of the WIVL and do the same. ●

Congo Upheaval: Revolutionary Prospects

by Evelyn Kaye

It was like a house that had been eaten by termites. The rebels came along and pushed it over. (*New York Times*, May 19.)

It is true that only a facade was left of Mobutu Sese Seko's utterly corrupt and brutal government, which had looted and ruined Zaire for over three decades. The Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation of the Congo (ADFL) led by Laurent Kabila merely dealt the final blow.

After Mobutu resigned in May, Kabila put up a new signpost to distinguish his government from its predecessor: the "Democratic Republic of the Congo" has replaced "Zaire." Under whatever name, its purpose is to stabilize the country, something Mobutu was no longer capable of doing.

There were several interrelated causes of Mobutu's downfall: the collapse of the economy and the infrastructure; the corrupt and parasitic nature of the regime; the anger of the masses in Zaire and the widespread turmoil in neighboring countries; and the withdrawal of support by the imperialist powers when it became clear that Mobutu could not shore up Zaire.

The underlying cause of the tumultuous events in Zaire, however, was both more profound and more universal: the reassertion of the fundamental crisis of world capitalism. Imperialism — capitalism in its epoch of decay — is driven by the class struggle and its own competitive rivalries to intensify its exploitation of the working class and peasantry. It is an oft-cited irony that Zaire, one of the most mineral-rich and therefore potentially wealthy countries in the world, has been among the very poorest. This is the legacy of imperialism.

To drain profit from the masses, imperialism needs political and financial stability. But brutal exploitation inevitably breeds mass discontent. Thus imperialism must bolster its capacity for military repression and seeks to whip up the fires of racial, ethnic and national hatred — in order to divert the hostilities of the workers and oppressed. Imperialism is caught in a massive contradiction; it seeks stability but engenders social instability and rivalries, inevitably leading to bloody uprisings and wars.

Under the rule of imperialism, there is no possibility of establishing a society that serves the masses' interests. The only answer to the growing attacks is the overthrow of the imperialist ruling classes in the advanced countries, as well as their junior partners in the formerly colonial and semi-colonial lands through international workers' socialist revolution. In a nutshell, this is the basis for the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution. This article is intended to contribute to a serious discussion of the revolutionary road in Africa.

KABILA AND THE MASSES

The Zairian civil war was triggered by the fight between the Tutsi-led government of Rwanda and the defeated Hutu militarists, who had perpetrated genocide against the Tutsis and now controlled the mass Hutu refugee camps in Zaire. This conflict overlapped with Mobutu's decision to call for the expulsion of the Banyamulenge, a Tutsi people in Eastern Zaire, and precipitated the formation of the ADFL. The expulsion was meant to deflect the growing dissatisfaction in Zaire by scapegoating "foreigners." (We believe it was necessary for revolutionaries to give military-technical sup-

port to the Banyamulenge in their struggle against Mobutu.)

Kabila, head of a small enclave near Lake Tanganyika, sided with the Banyamulenge and also served as political cover for Rwandan forces fighting the Hutus in the area. Kabila seized the opportunity presented by the early military victories, in large part achieved by the Rwandan government forces, to expand the ADFL — mainly by recruiting elements from Mobutu's retreating and disintegrating army.

The ADFL's advance was favored by Zairians eager to be rid of Mobutu. The leaderless masses cheered the demise of the regime but remained observers, not participants. Joy at the fall of Mobutu was combined with uncertainty about Kabila. Thus the masses did not rise up, nor did Kabila make any effort to call upon them to act. (There was therefore no basis for military support to Kabila as the leader of a mass anti-imperialist or anti-Mobutu struggle.)

IMPERIALISM BACKS KABILA

It is hard for supporters of Kabila and the ADFL to argue that imperialism is about to be ousted by the new regime. In the past, African nationalists proclaimed their goal to be the destruction of imperialist power. Today, they only demand that imperialism recognize their "independent" role and give them help and leeway to develop within the grip of the world market. But as the world capitalist economy continues to rot, even that modest ambition is doomed.

During the ADFL's march from the eastern region to the capital, Kinshasa, Kabila was already offering lucrative contracts to foreign companies. As one example, American Mineral Fields, headquartered in Hope, Arkansas — Bill Clinton's home town — clinched a billion-dollar deal with the ADFL to exploit huge copper and cobalt reserves and a new zinc mine. Royalties from several foreign companies started going directly to the ADFL, providing it with ready cash.

While the state is the major shareholder of the mining industries, investors everywhere were quickly assured that the rebels were ready to privatize the share of the enormous mineral wealth controlled by Gecamines, the state mining company. Privatization will be the key to Kinshasa making the payments on Mobutu's vast debts and staying within the tight strictures of imperialism's financial arms, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Kabila also moved rapidly to reassure the "international community" by appointing to high positions figures who had been working for institutions in the imperialist countries.

Washington's final desertion of Mobutu and willingness to back Kabila was crucial to Kabila's success. France miscalculated and remained tied to Mobutu too long; it is now scrambling to present a better face in Africa. The European Union (EU) announced on August 5th that it was ready to resume economic "cooperation" with Kinshasa after a five year break because of Mobutu. Belgium, the former colonial butcher of the Congo, has also hastened to resume full cooperation after a six-year stand-off.

Although the imperialist powers compete with each other in the Congo as elsewhere, the U.S. is dominant. U.S. imperialism seeks not only to continue extracting the lion's share of the resources and surplus value created in the Congo but wants as well to find an answer to the seething instability. The imperialists had no moral objection to Mobutu's sticky

fingers, but they did not appreciate the protests he stimulated nor the collapse of the infrastructure. Both obstructed the smooth extraction of profits. So they ditched Mobutu and, after some hemming and hawing, lined up with Kabila. One reason for imperialism's doubts about Kabila was his "Marxist" background, but he had renounced the Marxist rhetoric and his former rebel activity not only in words but in deeds: he avoided any role in protests against the Kinshasa regime in the 1990's.

The U.S. originally preferred Etienne Tshisekedi, the leader of the main bourgeois opposition party under Mobutu. But he was too compromised in the eyes of the masses because of his on-and-off collaboration with Mobutu, and



could not provide the strongman rule that capitalist stability requires. Nevertheless, members of Tshisekedi's party were included in Kabila's cabinet.

The U.S.'s crocodile tears over human rights and warnings over the safety of Americans were efforts to tighten the leash on Kabila. However, the forced return of Hutu refugees to Rwanda, including the massacre of unknown numbers, removed this excuse for U.S./U.N. intervention. The inevitable violations of refugee and human rights are overlooked by the imperialists when it suits their purpose. Kabila was granted a short grace period after his takeover. As we go to press, the U.S. and U.N. are putting the squeeze on the new regime for the suspected massacre of thousands of Rwandan Hutus during and after the military campaign. If Kabila refuses to cooperate, the penalty will not be immediate intervention but a freeze on major loans and other economic pressures. These issues remain pretexts for intervention hanging over Kabila and his fellow rulers in the region.

THE MASS WORKERS' UPSURGE

Less publicized than the devastating Tutsi-Hutu conflicts as a cause of the upheaval has been the role of the working

class. The imperialist media and the African upper-class nationalists have an interest in downplaying these struggles. Therefore some detail is in order, because the workers' struggle had a crucial impact on events and will have even more in the future. (Our main source is Leslie Winsome's book *Zaire: Continuity and Political Change in an Oppressive State*.)

Before the 1990's, protests against the Mobutu regime had been isolated and largely ineffective. But 1989 saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent overturn of Stalinist regimes by working-class-based movements (albeit with illusions in Western capitalism). The effect of popular eruptions against authoritarian rulers appealed to masses who suffered under imperialism and its wayward subcontractors like Mobutu. Mobutu's party, the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR), came to be called "mourir pour rien" — to die for nothing.

Just as Western imperialism sought to prevent both chaos and the potential for real, proletarian, revolution under Stalinism by urging Gorbachev & Co. to erect a democratic facade, the U.S. also pressed Mobutu for democratic reforms. Mobutu had to initiate a "Zairian perestroika," holding conferences and making other pretenses of consulting popular opinion. As economic conditions worsened, however, protests escalated.

While "perestroika" may have provided oxygen, the economic crisis and Mobutu's continual betrayal of his promises of democracy ignited the fire of protest. Mobutu, like many other "third world" statesmen, had invested his loot in imperialist countries. Mobutu & Co. pocketed the state's share of the profits rather than investing in infrastructure and production.

Mobutu's corruption was blatant; his ruling layer was known as the "kleptocracy." He allowed roads, railroads, the telephone system, the water supply and education and health to collapse. The gruesome conditions under which the masses lived became notorious. Only a quarter of the people had access to health care or drinkable water, and food shortages were common. Curable and preventable diseases were epidemic; 60 percent of children under

5 suffered malnutrition. Real wages in the early 1990's were less than 10 percent of what they had been in 1960. The rate of inflation in the 1990's reached a staggering 2,000 percent and higher. The state mining sector has declined to 10 percent of post-colonial output.

Strikes had broken out sporadically in the past, but Zairian workers began to assert an increasingly independent role among the regime's opponents. Mobutu had merged the three existing labor unions into one unit of the MPR and successfully turned the unions into virtually impotent state organs. However, when the austerity measures forced on Zaire by the IMF began to escalate in the 1980's, the unions had organized several significant strikes focusing on wage issues. (Of course, a strike was no small thing under Mobutu's regime.)

Early in 1990, civil servants at the foreign affairs ministry went on strike for over six months. The strike not only pressed for higher wages but protested against the regionalism and tribalism that favored President Mobutu's home Equateur region in government appointments. Doctors also struck. Following negotiations with the Union Nationale des Travailleurs Zairois (UNTZA), the government was forced to

grant a 55 percent salary increase to government employees across the board, in defiance of IMF rules.

UNTZA soon declared itself independent of the MPR. By late 1990 it had become even more assertive, calling on the regime to reduce inflation and stabilize the currency; it demanded a minimum wage and a new labor code. Many civil servants, teachers and medical personnel joined unions.

IMPERIALISTS DEFEND AGAINST STRIKES

The mining industry, the focus of the Zairian economy, was heavily affected by this labor upsurge. Frequent strikes by workers protesting economic conditions added to the problems that Gecamines faced because of the long-term fall of copper prices on the world market since 1975. Looting and rioting broke out in Shaba in October 1991. Additional strikes led the bosses to expel certain ethnic groups from the workforce. When the strife resulted in a 30 percent drop in output in 1991, the company was unable to live up to its commitments to customers. Investment was not forthcoming from 1992 on, given the fears of violence and labor unrest.

In late 1991 foreign troops were rushed to Zaire. In the midst of the ongoing strikes, several Zairian army units protesting low and unpaid wages seized Kinshasa's airport on September 22. They systematically looted and burned businesses, warehouses and other commercial properties in the capital. The masses, deprived of basic consumer staples because of the ongoing havoc, joined in. Residences and businesses of wealthy Zairians were particular targets. It was when this violence began spreading to other regions that France and Belgium came in to take control of the airport and other strategic points, with U.S. logistical support.

The imperialists had to step in to defend the Zairian state from the strike wave and the popular rising, and that was hardly the last eruption. A transport strike against privatization in 1996 was clearly a factor of no small importance behind Kabila's recent move to nationalize the transport system. This strike closed down the country's only seaport, stopped rail transport and halted ferry service on the Congo River. Trains running between the interior of the country and the port of Matadi, Zaire's sole outlet to the Atlantic, were stopped, and commuter rail service in Kinshasa, a city of six million, was halted.

The working class has been the key actor in the protests but not the only one. The Catholic Church, usually compliant as well as complicit with the regime, was forced to distance itself and play some role in these protests. Students, a consistent sector of opposition, became more involved in the demonstrations. In 1990, a mass slaughter of students after a protest in Lubumbashi (the center of the country's copper and cobalt mining industry and base of Gecamines) led to the imprisonment of the governor of Shaba province for 15 years, as a concession in the face of growing outrage.

IMPERIALISM, NATIONALISM & NEO-NATIONALISM

Since Kabila's takeover there has been notably little serious promise of big changes. In part this is because Zaire's economic crisis cannot be blamed purely on Mobutu's corruption. The downward direction has been common to the whole region, with its various governments and different post-colonial histories. It is clear that imperialism still has the whip hand and bears responsibility for the economic disaster.

Thus, while per capita gross domestic product in Zaire had been falling by 4 percent a year since 1976, it has also fallen (at just under 1 percent a year) for the region as a

whole. The average per capita income of all Africans has been cut in half since 1965, now standing at an average of 7 percent of what workers make in industrial countries.

Maltreatment of oppressed nations by imperialism is to be expected, but the indigenous governments in power also bear heavy responsibility for the masses' misery. When push comes to shove, they all defend the imperialist system and act as its agencies, presiding over and defending its exploitation and oppression in their countries.

This does not mean that all African rulers or the class elements they rest on play exactly the same role. Even pawns like Mobutu could become mavericks and parasites on the imperialist relationship, even on their own class. Others, like the military despots who rule in oil-rich Nigeria, are able to use their economic resources as leverage. While they are obviously tied to the world market, they obviously do not simply take orders from afar.

"NEW BREED" OF BONAPARTISTS

Some junior partners have tried to balance between the masses and the imperialists. They establish Bonapartist strongman rule, projecting nationalist ideology and promising to satisfy the needs of the masses. While postponing fulfillment of the aspirations of the masses, they talk of creating an independent African identity and role. In Africa at the moment, far weaker ideological versions of Bonapartism than elsewhere have arisen, and Kabila is in this mold. They point to a different goal than that dictated by imperialism. In contrast to the "anti-imperialist" nationalists of the past the so-called "new breed" of African rulers openly accepts capitalist development as well as the permanence of imperialism's existence. Cynically, they also accept the need to accommodate to imperialism in order, purportedly, to achieve pro-African aims. They reflect African capitalist elements who wish to avoid being either open pawns or ostensible opponents of imperialism. We call this outlook "neo-nationalist."

The postwar period of relative prosperity, mass upheavals in the colonies and the Cold War, allowed new African states a certain bargaining leverage in which real gains could be wrested from imperialism. One can understand the false optimism of the middle-class nationalists of that time; there seemed to be a material basis to hope for national economic independence. In contrast, in today's world the neo-nationalists' promise of a semi-independent course is nothing but cynical. It signals an attempt to accommodate with imperialism while tacking and veering between it and their own needs as a state comprador bourgeoisie. (In the Congo, the major economic enterprises are nationalized, albeit in "partnership" with various imperialist outfits. Thus the route to higher positions within the bourgeoisie runs through political influence in the government. Dependence on foreign capital is as prevalent as with the weak traditional private bourgeoisie in the oppressed nations.)

Kabila, who had been politically inactive for decades, has kept a low political profile in his months in power as well — hardly the mark of a leader trying to rouse the masses. He styles himself as a continuation of Patrice Lumumba, the first premier of an independent Congo in the 1960's, who was ousted and killed with CIA involvement. Lumumba advocated the unity of the Congolese people and was a harsh critic of ethnic-based politics and divisions. He was martyred not just because of his willingness to deal with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Imperialism sought to crush in the bud the mass struggle that Lumumba symbolized. In

contrast, Kabila is a broker attempting to stabilize the Congo through a new neo-colonial system, now that the rule of overt counterrevolutionaries like Mobutu has proved ineffective.

NEO-NATIONALISM IN ACTION

Many commentators (for example, the former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere) hold that the chief fact about the overthrow of Mobutu was that it was carried out by Africans themselves and marked a big advance in African self-assertion. The leader of the "new breed" who helped Kabila to power is President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, who seized power in 1986; he also backed the Tutsi-based Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1994 when it launched its invasion of Rwanda and ousted the genocidal Hutu regime. *Time* magazine's cover story in May on "Africa's New Order" gloated:

With Museveni as its godfather, this realignment of



Mobutu, Mandela and Kabila: negotiation attempt collapsed. Mandela, fronting for the U.S., flopped.

Africa's old order tends to be Anglophone in its international voice, pro-American in its diplomacy and obeisant to Adam Smith in its economics. As the old-style Big Men are being pushed aside, so is the influence of France.

Devotion to Adam Smith is a euphemism for devotion to the World Bank and the IMF. Here is a devastating academic assessment of Uganda's structural adjustment program (SAP), adopted with imperialist approval:

Despite touting Uganda as an economic miracle and likening it to the "tigers" of East Asia, even the World Bank has admitted that real poverty has increased under the SAP. Privatization has led to retrenchments and layoffs, and discriminatory investment policies have marginalized indigenous business and production. Furthermore, in the quest to encourage foreign business and enterprise, the state has turned a blind eye to the conditions of labor, wherein wages are suppressed to below subsistence level and trade union activity strenuously prohibited.

The SAP has also affected access to social services such as health care through the introduction of user fees at government-owned institutions, policies that have placed the cost of basic medicine beyond the reach of the rural poor. ... Because Uganda is considered a veritable bread-

basket, there is no coherent food security policy. The net result is that the promotion of food crops for the export market has led to domestic shortages, and in some instances ... even to famine. Long able to feed its neighbors, Uganda is in serious danger of being unable to feed itself. (J. Oloka-Onyango, in *Current History*, May 1997.)

If Kabila is to be another Museveni, the masses of the Congo have nothing to celebrate.

APPEAL TO BLACK AMERICA?

Despite this record, the U.S. Black nationalist Elombe Brath, leader of the Patrice Lumumba Coalition in New York, ecstatically defends Kabila and hails the "new day" that Museveni & Co. are bringing to Africa. He wrote about the July summit in Kinshasa attended by nine African presidents, including Museveni and Kabila:

The assemblage was testimony that Africa's new leaders intend to stand in solidarity with the priority of self-determination, based on their own assessment of the situation from an "on the ground" vantage point. It is this consideration, along with their intentions to cooperate more regionally on salient issues that affect all concerned, and for the first time extend an overture to Africans in the diaspora to participate in this dramatic new direction designed to project Africa's interest and that of African people worldwide into the next millennium. (*Daily Challenge* July 25-27.)

The rhetoric of "self-determination" and regional cooperation is used to cover the fact that these leaders are planning to be a cooperative part of the imperialist order. The content of "the overture to Africans in the diaspora" was spelled out at a subsequent conference of Africans and U.S. Blacks, attended by many of the same leaders, in Harare, Zimbabwe. The same issue

of the *Daily Challenge* reported that "African leaders urged Black Americans ... to lobby corporations and the U.S. government for investment ..."

Not only Black Americans were invited to the conference. Jack Kemp, the recent vice-presidential candidate of the Republican Party and a noted economic conservative, was on the scene. This unabashed imperialist gushed:

I feel too that I am home because this is the home of civilization. ... I plan to tell the American people and my party ... to get busy building trade and investment in Africa.

The enthusiasm of types like Kemp for African capitalism tells the real story.

SHAKY STRONGMAN

Despite enthusiasm for Kabila outside the Congo, his situation is precarious. In the last days of the Mobutu regime, he neatly evaded a U.S./South African attempt to negotiate Mobutu's departure and his own accession to power; that would have put him in a puppet-like stance he wished to avoid. Even so, his base is shaky, since it is concentrated in the eastern provinces. As well, much of the population in Kinshasa has been successfully stirred to consider all Tutsis

as foreigners. The hostility to the Banyamulenge, as well as to the Rwandan forces associated with Kabila's rise to power, creates problems for the regime, which has been busy denying foreign dependency. Further, the Congolese sections of Kabila's army were not won in any political conversion and have no loyalty to Kabila; these ex-Mobutu troops are justifiably despised by the population at large.

Whatever deals Kabila made with local power barons on his march to power are most likely to be ephemeral. Secessionary movements are reported in Shaba province (formerly Katanga) where they have a long history, and elsewhere. Given the decrepit means of communication and transportation — plus the exacerbating regional and ethnic divisions — internal and regional strife can be expected to accelerate. Armed conflict has already been reported in the East between the Babembe people of the Congo, supported by Burundian Hutus, and the Banyamulenge backed by Kabila.

POPULAR DISCONTENT

As we write, the reports on the controversies and unrest in Kinshasa surrounding the new regime are far from fully informative. We know that there has been both repression and protest. There have been calls for democracy, and undoubtedly this reflects a genuine sentiment. But it is unclear whether all such protests are under the sway of ruling-class politicians like Tshisekedi. How long can working-class and other popular discontent be pent up?

Kabila's inaugural ceremony in late May showed that his real base of support was friendly regimes in the region rather than any big layer of the Congolese population. On the podium the presidents of Uganda and Rwanda were joined by the leaders of Angola, Zambia and Burundi in calling on Congolese to support their new government. Absent were representatives of Congo's peasant associations, unions, student associations and others that participated in the anti-Mobutu protests in recent years.

The bulk of the "political-commercial class" — the state comprador bourgeoisie — in Kinshasa turned away from Mobutu. Now many are demanding to be included in the new regime and to share in its spoils. Kabila's postponement of elections is meant to buy time to establish his rule.

As desperately as Kabila needs outside support to bolster his fragile regime, it will be hard to retain tension-free relations with the surrounding nations, each of which has its own agenda. If his regime should face an internal challenge, the U.S. and West Europe will keep as low a profile as possible and certainly try to avoid sending their own troops in. Even France, which was openly dispatching armed forces into French-speaking Africa to bolster friendly despots, has now announced an end to such efforts.

IS THERE A WORKING CLASS ALTERNATIVE?

Kabila is clearly aware of the ever-present threat posed by the working class. That is why he made the resolution of

the unemployment crisis and the reconstruction of the transportation system the main promises in his inaugural address — promises he cannot keep. A Reuters dispatch reported on Kabila's move to pay public employees for the first time in months:

Many of an estimated 600,000 civil servants in the nation of 40 million are more angered at getting only one month's pay from the new powers who overthrew Mobutu's 32-year autocracy last month, than pleased at being paid at all. The workers also learned with bitterness ... that pay raises were out of the question. ... How the heavily indebted state, which receives next to no tax revenue from a chaotic society, will be able to pay up ... is unclear.

Will the working class see through Kabila as it had come to see the possibility of fighting Mobutu in the past decade? We started this article by asserting the need for the overthrow of capitalism in both its imperialist and ex-colonial nationalist forms — that is, for socialist revolution. Recognition of the unique historical role of the working class to lead the socialist revolution is a central premise of Trotskyism, and for that reason we are encouraged to see that our class has begun to assert itself in the Congo. But there is a question: is there enough of a proletariat to serve as the revolutionary agency in the Congo?

Reliable facts on the basic questions of working-class composition are extremely hard to come by. We do know the following. By 1960, both urbanization and the size of the working class in the Congo were high by African standards. 37 percent of adult males were wage earners, and 24 percent of the population was urbanized. Given the dominance of the mining industry, a relative handful of large firms employed half the workforce. So there was already a high degree of concentration, a necessity for the proletariat in achieving a conscious estimate of its revolutionary strength.

But economic backwardness and ethnic rivalries tend to retard the potential of working class consciousness. A particularly divisive and localized mode of colonial rule was inherited, and the particularly dramatic geographic divisions of a vast country were intensified by the lack of a unifying infrastructure and political institutions. Thus even when working class struggles occurred they tended not to spread beyond one area.

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IS KEY

After 1965, the growth of the working class stagnated, especially in comparison to the overall population. Mining became more capital intensive, and there was some expansion in public employment and smaller enterprises. But because of surging unemployment, the greatest economic growth came in the highly individualized "informal" sector or secondary economy, where people engage in lumpen activity, petty commodity production, trade and usury — as well as more working-class labor like taxi driving and shoe repair. So on the one hand, there is a large enough working class, which has already proved it can halt strategic sectors of the economy. But it has yet to demonstrate to itself and potential allies that it can lead politically. The important areas of concentration (mining and the public sector, including transport and other key areas) have yet to act in concert.

In Russia at the turn of the century, the working class was numerically small. But it was able to unify and show that it could lead the peasantry and the national minorities — that made the workers' socialist revolution of 1917 possible. In the Congo, sectoralization and regionalization have been strong

Letters Welcome

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enough to inhibit the development of a Congolese working class that sees itself playing that unifying role. Proletarian revolutionaries have to find programmatic demands to address the forging of working class unity in the country.

Consciousness is the key. When the spine of the nationalist movement was a small contingent of the middle class, the working class was just coming into politics. Had the movement thrived, a working-class wing and a drive toward class independence would have developed, as separate class interests came to a head. The murder of Lumumba and the destruction of the movement were devastating material defeats that put this whole development on hold.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

While the working class struggle has intensified in the past few years, it seems that political consciousness has not kept apace. Middle-class leadership of the opposition to Mobutu, on the one hand, and the stress on guerrilla warfare on the other, both serve to undercut the growth of class politics. These factors did not promote the growth of proletarian Marxism in the Congo.

Given the limits of our knowledge of the Congo, we can



Kagame (Rwanda) and Museveni (Uganda): "New Breed" means new road to dead end.

not elaborate a program in detail. Clearly, the working-class vanguard would have to champion the democratic rights of oppressed peoples in and around the Congo. Whether this means defense of the right to self-determination or cultural autonomy in particular cases, we do not yet have an opinion.

Peasants represent approximately 60 percent of the population; under both colonialism and neo-colonialism, part of the capitalists' ability to maintain low industrial wages was based on transferring the cost onto the rural population through low agricultural prices. Rural development was savagely subordinated, so that there has been a virtually permanent agricultural strike. Therefore, the bulk of farming is for subsistence rather than the market. There is some plantation farming but, like proletarianization, it has pretty much stagnated since 1965. It is clear that the peasants in the Congo, as elsewhere, do not have their own class alternative — they will follow either the bourgeoisie (national or local) or the working class. However, again we need to know more

to responsibly formulate proposals concerning the land.

One thing is certain: the building of a working-class revolutionary party in the Congo will be decisive for the working class to fulfill its potential. Given the explosive character of the African scene, a revolution would spread like wildfire. The planting of a revolutionary pole standing for working-class unity, and an alliance with the impoverished peasantry, will represent the desperately needed challenge to the ethnic rivalries and ravaging oppression. Qualitative economic development demands the smashing of the present bourgeois state in the Congo and its replacement by a workers' state as part of a federation of African socialist states. No individual state can build socialism on its own, let alone the ravaged Congo.

SOUTH AFRICAN ROLE

In regard to world capitalism's need to stabilize the tumultuous region, Nelson Mandela's effort to push negotiations between Mobutu and Kabila shows that South Africa is trying to play out the role of a sub-imperialist regional power. The black figures in Mandela's Government of National Unity can only act as a cover for the still white-dominated South African imperial interests, something the latter did not have in the past.

Of course, South African imperialism is subordinate to the dominant U.S. imperialism. Clinton slapped down South Africa's attempt to win important mining concessions in the Congo but still needs it as a junior partner. It is in Washington's interest that South Africa use its power within Africa to keep the continent's masses in line. The South African proletariat has to fight any interventionary role by the "new" South Africa. Given the sharpness of the contradictions still operating in South Africa together with the proletariat's advanced consciousness, the spark for the development of the revolution in the rest of Africa is most likely to come from there.

The Marxist strategy of permanent revolution rests on the fact that the material preconditions exist for a liberating transformation of the world. Not only is the working class the only class that can make the socialist revolution, but only through proletarian revolution can the democratic and national freedoms that imperialism denies be achieved. The fundamental need for a revolutionary working-class party also requires a struggle to re-create the Fourth International in Africa. The weakness of working-class forces within individual nations in sub-Saharan Africa makes the need for a solidly working-class international party even more vital.

Marxists must tell the truth to our fellow workers: the Congolese working class is not powerful enough to create socialism on its own. But only a nationalist would think that is the question. The Congolese working class has already shown its ability to choke the economy through strike action. Under Mobutu it took on the government repeatedly, mounting strikes and protests. Objectively it has the capacity to lead the revolution to smash bourgeois state power.

However, the building of a revolutionary proletarian party and International will be decisive in determining whether the working class can cohere politically to exercise its leadership. With the leadership of a revolutionary proletarian party and International, the class can become strong enough to take state power, supported by its peasant and petty-bourgeois allies. Through the rise of revolutionary class struggle, a federation of workers' states can be forged across the African continent. ●

Immigrants

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the kind of thugs who become cops to show "lesser races" who is boss inevitably results in brutality, sadism and murder.

Because the anti-immigrant attacks are so inherent in the daily operation of capitalist society, the only successful fight against them has to become anti-capitalist and revolutionary. Our purpose in this article is to demonstrate, through historical examples and political analysis, that the current pro-Democratic Party leadership of the immigrant movement has to be replaced by a revolutionary leadership based on the working class and its interests.

ANTI- AND "PRO-"IMMIGRANT CAPITALISTS

An increasingly important minority of U.S. capitalists and their political pit-bulls are becoming overtly racist in their attacks on immigrants. They generally reflect the interests of middle-sized companies which have not invested abroad. They sell on the U.S. market and maintain highly restrictive hiring practices. Out of fear of competition from the giant global corporations, they wrap themselves in the American flag and the banners of right-wing populism. They find a voting base among economically desperate sections of the petty bourgeoisie and elements of the white labor aristocracy.

Pat Buchanan is the chief mouthpiece for this sector of the ruling class, warning about "the immigrant hordes" and the threatened "loss of America's Western culture and values." Such "respectable" politicians give aid, comfort and stimulation not only to anti-immigrant thuggery but also to the dangerous rise in the general chauvinist sentiment.

Immigrant workers, however, face another danger now even more difficult to combat than the Buchanans: the mainstream capitalists. They have far greater power today and even claim to be anti-racist, to support immigrant rights and to deplore "excessive" police brutality. They're the bosses who benefit from immigrants and love the low wages forced on them, and the effect this has in depressing wages in general. The "establishment" capitalists are represented by the so-called moderate wing of the Republican Party and, especially in recent national elections, by the Democrats.

Given this reality, it is outrageous that the present leadership of the immigrants' struggle is intimately tied to the Democratic Party. This year's October 12 demonstration for immigrant rights sponsored by Coordinadora '96, for example, is officially led by politicians from the Democratic Party, as well as by clergy and community organizers linked to them. The Democratic president and Democrats in Congress have done just as much to impose anti-immigrant laws, nationally and locally, as the right-wing Republicans.

There are of course variations within the moderate-to-liberal bloc. In words, liberal Democrats like Jesse Jackson and Ted Kennedy defend immigrants. In practice, they supported Clinton, the author of a 25 percent increase in funding for the repressive Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the program to expand local police by adding 100,000 new cops. The liberals tell their supporters that the Republicans would do worse, while Clinton boasts to the capitalists that he got away with more than the Republicans ever could. In this Clinton is right: the "lesser evil" is no defense against the greater. As we showed in our article on the 1996 election, the lesser evil in theory becomes the

greater evil in practice. (PR 53.)

There is a vast social gap between the Democratic Party, run by a wing of the capitalist class, and the working class, especially its most oppressed sectors. Thus two different elements are active in the movement for immigrant rights: a leadership beholden to the exploiters, and the mass base of exploited workers. The misleaders maintain their dependence on the Democrats because they believe that lasting solutions and peaceful reforms are still possible under capitalism. Their dominance is the central reason why the movement has not yet been effective in the face of a mounting attack. The immigrants' struggle badly needs a leadership based on the working class, not tied to a capitalist system that thrives on racism, class division and superexploitation.

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSAULT

Last August, Congress and President Clinton passed the "welfare reform" bill that abolishes federal welfare aid. It ends access, even for legal immigrants in this country less than 10 years, to a whole series of federal services, including Social Security old age and disability payments. In September, Clinton signed an immigration bill funding 1200 border patrol officers and 900 immigration investigators with wide powers of deportation; it also denies federally funded welfare to undocumented residents.

The INS has sharply escalated the numbers of immigrants deported or excluded from entry because of a new procedure established under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. At the same time, applications for citizenship have increased enormously. Yet background checks, fingerprinting rituals, and other additions to the process mean that immigrants are now routinely treated like criminals until proven innocent, and have to wait years longer for citizenship status than in the past.

The key precedents for these oppressive national laws were adopted in California, a center of the anti-immigrant campaign. In 1994, California voters passed Proposition 187, denying undocumented immigrants hospital treatment, public education and other public services and forcing hospital and school workers to act like cops and turn suspected illegals over to the authorities. In 1996 the voters adopted Proposition 209, ending affirmative action in university admissions.

There have been mass protests in Los Angeles against Prop 187: one march had tens of thousands of Latino youth and shut down many of Los Angeles's high schools. The immigrant rights march last October of over 100,000 in Washington likewise mobilized tens of thousands of Latino youth and others from the East Coast and the Midwest who want to fight the attacks.

Immediately after the passing of Prop 187, opponents got a court injunction that has kept the measure in abeyance pending a final decision. The federal measures, too, have yet to be enforced because of legal challenges and legislative attempts to modify them. But in July, a New York judge upheld the constitutionality of removing welfare benefits from legal immigrants who are not U.S. citizens. This decision was opposed by New York's Mayor Giuliani, no friend of the foreign-born poor or any working people of color. He knows how important immigrant workers are to the city's sizeable sweatshop economy.

The hesitation and squabbling within the bourgeoisie in implementing these laws reflect their uncertainty over how fast to assault the working class as a whole. The capitalist drive against immigrant rights, however, will proceed, despite

arguments over pace. Weakening those workers with the fewest legal rights increases class divisions and thereby steps up the exploitation of all workers at every level.

This is on top of the race card the bourgeoisie plays for the same purpose. It is no accident that the most outrageous acts are aimed at immigrants of color. Historically, much of the enormous growth and relative stability of U.S. capitalism has come from the superexploitation of Black labor. Racism has served to divide the American working class. Large numbers of better-off white workers were led to see Blacks as undeserving, sub-human and dangerous enemies who had to be kept down, forcibly if necessary. This has not only helped keep Black wages low; it has forced down white wages too because of the competitive job market. Thus racism has produced extra profits out of white as well as Black labor.

Racism has also served as a justification for imperialism and America's "right" to intervene abroad as it chooses. The U.S. Black struggle and the liberation struggles in the colonial and semi-colonial countries have made the imperialists shut up about "the white man's burden," but they still act in the same way to superexploit much of Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. When immigrant workers from these lands come to the U.S., they do not escape racist superexploitation.

The U.S., a country of immigrants, has always been prone to an anti-immigrant chauvinism, which becomes more active during times of economic crisis. For example, during the Great Depression of the 1930's, police rounded up hundreds of thousands of people of Mexican origin — including many U.S. citizens! — and herded them onto trains bound south of the border.

The current long-term and deepening economic decay, starting in the mid-1970's, has heightened mass anti-immigrant sentiment around the world. In other imperialist countries like France, the attacks have been even more organized and virulent than here. Even during capitalist booms there are never enough jobs to go around and workers compete with each other for employment and wages. But during crises, competition can become cutthroat. This compels not only individual rivalry but group competition, and the most oppressed groups get the worst jobs — or none at all. Competitive hostility spills out into all areas of life, well beyond the job market. The capitalists and their Democratic and Republican politicians and media hacks tell employed, white male, U.S.-citizen workers that their increasing plight is due to "welfare mothers" and "criminals" (code for Black people) and immigrant "freeloaders."

THE LATINO RESPONSE

Black people have always been the main target of racism in the U.S. But now, the persistent bias against Latino workers, U.S. and foreign-born, is rising rapidly. Therefore, although chauvinist attacks are accelerating against West Indians, Africans, Arabs and Asians, the demagogues are now whipping up racial prejudices against Latinos in particular to a near-fever pitch. "English only" groups are at work everywhere. Buchanan and his friends scream about "the browning of America" and warn that Latinos are

becoming even more numerous than Blacks. Soon, they cry, the old America will disappear, whites will no longer be a majority and English will become a second language. "Immigrant" is now often used as a threatening code-word for Latin Americans.

The Latin American presence in the U.S. is not at all new. Many Mexicans unwillingly became U.S. residents when the U.S. took half of Mexico in the middle of the 19th century. Large-scale immigration from Mexico started during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20. Puerto Ricans, likewise unwillingly, became part of the U.S. in the 1898 war with Spain: the U.S. conquered Spain's remaining American and Asian colonies and joined the ranks of modern imperialist nations. In 1917 the U.S. forced citizenship on Puerto Ricans in order to draft them for slaughter in the first imperialist World War.



Phelps-Dodge strike by Mexican-American miners in 1983-85.

The post-war boom produced the greatest wave of international migrations in history. The U.S. and other imperialist countries pulled unskilled labor from their own rural and undeveloped areas into their growing industrial metropolises. So vast was the expansion that they also moved to "import" labor from colonial and neo-colonial countries to help perform the dirty, low-paid jobs. The boom made old restrictions on immigration an obstacle to expanded production; the world colonial revolution and the Cold War rivalry made overt race barriers a liability. In the 1950's, for example, the U.S. shamefacedly ended the bans on Chinese and other Asian immigration that had been in place since the 1880's.

Lower-wage manufacturing jobs drew not only Blacks and whites from the South, but also masses from Puerto Rico, to Northeastern and Midwestern cities, where they became a major presence by the mid-'50's. Mexicans came in increasing numbers, joining the existing Chicano population in the cities and agricultural areas of the Southwest. Soon they migrated in increasing numbers to Midwestern farms and cities where they found themselves working alongside Puerto Ricans. Now U.S. capitalism draws Latin American immigrants of many different nationalities into the lower rungs of its domestic working class, doing the hardest, lowest-paid work and living in some of its worst slums.

Hostility toward Latin Americans, particularly incoming Mexicans, has been most obvious in the Southwest. But similar racism was also directed at Puerto Ricans from the very day of their arrival on the East Coast.

FARMWORKERS' MOVEMENT

Following the lead of the Black struggles for equality and justice, Mexican and Puerto Rican movements in the late 1960's and early '70's established a Latino tradition of organized mass protest in this country.

The first modern Latino mass movement in the U.S. was the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (later the United Farm Workers of America), which started in the 1960's in California. U.S.-born and immigrant farmworkers had no rights under the laws guaranteeing the minimum wage, collective bargaining, the prohibition of child labor or even the presence on work sites of toilet and wash-up facilities. The organizing drive in California's vineyards aroused great enthusiasm and heroic self-sacrifice from the Chicano, Mexican and Filipino workers. They struck, sat down and picketed while enduring mass firings and attacks by police and private guards. The seasonal and migratory nature of the work made it doubly hard to build stable union locals. And the owners were never shy about turning immigrant organizers in to the U.S. immigration police, "La Migra."

Cesar Chavez and the other UFWOC leaders consciously modelled the movement to reflect the NAACP/Martin Luther King-led Black civil rights movement of the mid-50's-'60's. That is, it adopted the protest movement's line as dictated by its pro-capitalist, court-oriented, pacifist misleaders, who relied upon the good will of the Democratic Party for results. In the face of early setbacks, Chavez & Co. called off further strike activity. They didn't demand or campaign for support strikes and other mass actions by the rest of the AFL-CIO; that would have required an open attack on the racist, boss-loving union bureaucracy and a program addressed to winning the ranks and overturning the conservative leaders.

So Chavez came up with something the union hacks could tolerate. In 1965 the Farm Workers called the national table-grape boycott, which continued on and off for almost 20 years with little noticeable effect. Chavez concentrated almost all efforts on lobbying for a California farm labor law similar to federal laws, which would extend minimum wage, union recognition elections and child labor bans to farm workers in the state. But the owners either shut the union out completely or signed sweetheart deals with UFWA's rivals in the Teamsters' Union. In either case agribusinesses fired UFWA organizers or had them deported with impunity.

By the time the law passed in the late 70's, UFWA

membership was half what it had been in the mid-'60's. Demoralization was rife: farmworkers themselves were split — citizens against immigrants, legal residents against undocumented workers — as field jobs disappeared with the end of the post-war boom.

The "realistic" legalist approach weakened the potential of a very promising militant movement. The UFWA is only now recovering from its legacy. The farmworkers, still mostly Mexican and Chicano, have again shown their willingness to fight. The leadership of the AFL-CIO has undergone cosmetic changes and actually held a carefully controlled rally this May in support of California strawberry pickers who are struggling to unionize. The basic liberal reformist strategy is the same — bring public relations-style pressure on the capitalist government for strictly controlled official union recognition elections. They still do nothing to build any genuine workers' mass action.

RADICAL BUT NOT REVOLUTIONARY

Despite its misleadership and strategy, the UFWA was a turning point. A radical wing of the Latino movement sprung up in the late '60's; its leaders also looked to the Black movement for inspiration — but to the more radical Black Power wing (and later, the Black Panther Party) that arose in response to the failures of the integrationist liberals. The Puerto Rican-based Young Lords were centered in New York and Chicago; there were also the MPI (Pro-Independence Movement) and the Puerto Rican Student Union. In the Southwest, the Brown Berets, La Raza Unida Party and others won even greater numbers.

By the mid-1970's, all the radical Latino organizations had fragmented. Even though some of the fragments claimed to be building Marxist parties, the radical elements represented elements of the educated middle-classes. Inspired by the Vietnamese, Cuban and Chinese national revolutions and schooled by police brutality in the U.S., they saw that imperialism could not be reformed out of existence: revolution was necessary. But just as Mao turned from hostility to imperialism to accommodation with it, the radical middle-class forces, "anti-imperialist" but not really anti-capitalist, became more open to making deals. Ultimately they either faded out of politics or joined the liberal union bureaucrats, priests and other Democratic Party sellouts whom they had previously rejected.

"GOOD" AND "BAD" IMMIGRANTS

The global economic decline that started in the 1970's increased immigration to the U.S. and other imperialist nations. The collapse of "third world" nationalism and the

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increased drain of resources by imperialist superexploitation bred starvation conditions. As masses were forced to fight each other for scraps, bloody wars broke out. Millions were pushed out of their homelands by wars and economic desperation, and large contingents tried to get to the U.S. to survive. Among them were emigrés from Haiti, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Mexico. Those who managed to get to the U.S., avoiding Coast Guard and Migra attacks, starvation and drowning, were received with racist hatred, police brutality, and near-slave labor jobs.

It was rather different with anti-Castro Cuban refugees, until recently. Almost the entire Cuban capitalist class, one of the most corrupt and servile in the world, fled, after losing its land and factories to Castro's radical nationalist revolt. These *gusanos* ("worms") received huge amounts of money and weapons from the U.S. government; elements among them played far right-wing roles in Watergate, the Contra war against Nicaragua, attacks on Cuba, etc. The wealthiest and lightest-skinned of them managed to build a sectoral bastion of their own within the bourgeoisie, particularly in south Florida, New Jersey and Puerto Rico. As the leading edge of the Cuban emigration, they kept the petty-bourgeois elements and even many of the immigrant Cuban workers in their reactionary grip, in a way very different from other Spanish-speaking immigrants.

Later waves of Cuban immigrants got different treatment. The massive immigration of the Mariel Boatlift in 1980 occurred well into the economic crisis, with anti-immigrant policies stepped up at all levels. The poorer and often darker-skinned post-1980 Cuban immigrants faced the same racist stereotyping as U.S. Blacks and other immigrants of color: they were accused of criminality, shiftlessness and low intelligence. Since then, the U.S. has severely restricted new immigration from Cuba and even amicably consulted with the hated Fidelista "socialist" government on how to keep dissatisfied Cubans from coming to the U.S.

The change in status of Cuban immigrants, and the treatment of Nicaraguans and Salvadorans, illuminates the class basis of the U.S.'s anti-immigrant policies. Salvadoran immigrants, mostly poor rural and urban workers, were fleeing the CIA-established death squads and army of the bloody military-dominated government. La Migra found a thousand ways to keep them out, deny them asylum and deport them. Nicaraguan refugees, mostly from middle-class and petty-bourgeois backgrounds, were fleeing the radical-nationalist Sandinista government. U.S. capitalists and their government hated the Sandinistas and organized the Contra army to overthrow them. But their attitude toward non-wealthy Nicaraguan immigrants, no matter how right-wing, quickly grew cool, and La Migra made it harder for them to settle. With the downfall of the Sandinistas, Nicaraguans now find themselves treated like other, non-favored Latino immigrants.

WHAT ROAD FORWARD FOR LATINOS IN THE U.S.?

There are clear linguistic, cultural and historical links between the U.S.- and foreign-born people who trace their origin to the various Spanish-speaking countries of this hemisphere. However, it would be a gross mistake to understand them as a homogeneous bloc, politically or otherwise. While most Latinos understand their commonalities, they still emphasize their country of origin as their primary ethnic identity within North American society. The differences between Latin-American peoples are real; over time, whether they will be decisive or kept in the background is not pre-ordained.

U.S. capitalism certainly pushes toward the fusion of Latin-Americans into a single "interest group" or ethnic bloc. There is certainly an overall bias against Latinos which cannot be ignored. The pressures of national electoral politics indicate that a big "Hispanic bloc" can get more of its demands on the government fulfilled than smaller nationality-based interest groups can expect. In fact, the underlying bourgeois theory about how government benefits are politically distributed says that such blocs are in competition with each other; therefore it is better to grow large to get a bigger share. Thus Latinos are pressured into a single unit — in political competition with Blacks and other groups because, the theory says, smaller units like Puerto Ricans or Dominicans can't compete with the larger groups.

However, competitive pressures also undermine such larger blocs and force each nationality group into rivalry with



Farm Workers leader Cesar Chavez. Struggle was a turning point for Latino movement.

the others. In yesteryears, when the working-class voters of the various sectional groups got some minimal gains as their "share" of the sops, today they don't even get hopes — which is why they vote less and less. As conditions worsen and government takes back more and more, the tendencies toward exacerbating relations between Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, etc. can grow — in the job market, in the neighborhoods and on the electoral front.

National origin is not the only line of fracture that exists among Latinos. Anti-Latino prejudice varies according to skin color. Latinos who appear as white meet far less prejudice than do those who more clearly reveal their African and/or Indian heritage. The racist underpinning of the anti-immigrant, anti-Latino trend cannot be ignored.

CLASS DIVISION IS CENTRAL

Nevertheless, the most crucial line of differentiation among Latinos is the same that runs through the rest of society. It bisects each separate nationality and (despite impressionist views of the moment) is far deeper and more significant than the national and racial differences. It is the class line, the division between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

U.S. capitalism discriminates against all Blacks — less so

against the relatively small numbers of Black capitalists and the better-off middle strata, but they are still stigmatized. When they do lead fights against racism, they do so from their own class vantage point. They inevitably function to keep the masses in check, blur the class line among Blacks and help prevent working class Blacks, whites, Latinos, et al from becoming class conscious and revolutionary.

The Latino bourgeoisie and middle class play a similar role among Latinos, except that the specifics of the relationship between the capitalist and working-class elements varies according to the specific national background. For example, in some cases many Latino workers will work for the Latino bourgeoisie (Cubans, for example). But in most cases, the workers toil directly for the Anglo corporations, and the upper classes act as brokers between U.S. capitalism and the specific workforce. However, whether or not the upper class Latinos are brokers, direct exploiters or simply middle strata frontmen, their claim to represent the interests of Latino toilers is fraudulent.

Under the surface of events, capitalist contradictions are intensifying. For all their prominence today, the middle-class Latino "community leaders" are far more tied to capitalism than they are to the needs of their followers. In this, they do not differ from the middle-class leadership of Blacks and other oppressed groups, immigrant or U.S.-born.

INTERNATIONALISM AND INTERRACIALISM

Marxists are open and unwavering internationalists. We have no interest in building separate nations. We are, however, on the side of oppressed colonized masses who struggle against our common enemy, the ruling imperialists. We defend the right of self-determination in order to prove that nations and national bourgeoisies are no answer to imperialism — and that the workers of all nations must unite and fight for socialist revolution.

In a similar way, when the struggle is not anti-colonial — when it is not a question of building separate nations — we defend the right of self-organization by oppressed nationalities or races. We understand why the Latino masses in the U.S., in the absence of a unified working class fighting for their interests against discrimination, are drawn to ethnic organizations out of self-defense. We will fight alongside these workers against our common enemy, openly stating that the struggle will show the real solution to the needs of the masses: not separate ethnic or racial blocs and alliances but internationalist and interracialist working-class solidarity. This means a rejection of the pro-bourgeois misleaders.

As Leninists we know the difference between the national, ethnic and racial consciousness of oppressed peoples and the national, ethnic and racial consciousness of the oppressors. It is understandable why oppressed groups want to demonstrate pride in their accomplishments when the oppressors constantly seek to debase them. However, because revolutionaries are committed to telling fellow workers the truth as they see it, we always make it clear that the goal is class consciousness and not racial or ethnic consciousness. The latter are dead-ends for all workers.

Following this outlook, we defend efforts toward self-organization. In circumstances where it is the only path open to the oppressed, we advocate it. As far as choosing between overall Latino self-organization as opposed to that by specific Latino nationalities, communists generally support larger unities rather than narrower ones. Latino-wide formations, however, are only justified as a means to deal with immediate

problems that concern Latinos alone. Temporary fronts and joint actions with other groups are increasingly necessary if the oppressed are to defend themselves in the U.S. today. Therefore, in response to the anti-immigrant laws and police brutality cases, the widest possible unity in action by all oppressed peoples and their supporters is warranted — it is vital that all workers and oppressed people solidarize with the defense of immigrants, Latinos and non-Latinos alike.

While such temporary and broad formations are important for specific defense actions, they are insufficient. Capitalism is the cause; the system demands crackdowns against immigrants. Thus our chief aim is to work for the leadership of the working-class vanguard and its internationalist and interracialist program; the proletarian revolutionary party is the only answer for the plight of the immigrants.

REFORMIST "UNITY" = PRO-CAPITALIST DEAD END

The call for unity between immigrants and their allies is popular today. Coordinadora '96, the committee that organized this and last year's rallies, stands for a "nationwide movement of immigrants and poor people," not of immigrants alone. Coordinadora raises a program of demands which it calls Proposition One: human and constitutional rights, equal opportunity and affirmative action, citizenship now and amnesty for undocumented immigrants, no more police brutality, free public education for all children through university, reform labor law and increase the minimum wage to cost of living, and expansion of health services.

The specificity of many of these demands, plus the title Proposition One, affirms the fact that they are meant to be achieved not only under capitalism but through the methods of bourgeois-democratic electoralism — aided by mass pressure. Coordinadora '96 calls for "a new movement for civil rights for immigrants and poor people."

This proposal amounts to asking the capitalist ruling class to act in the interest of immigrants and suppress the racist, chauvinist right wing. It will never happen, especially not at a time when racists are winning referendums on such social issues. Moreover, "democratically" elected governments, far from expanding free public education, are defunding public schools and making college far less affordable and less accessible to minorities than ever in recent history. The proposals envision a similar strategy, based upon trading votes for supposed support, as that put forward by civil rights and labor leaders for decades. This strategy proved to be a dead end, even in the long-gone period of prosperity.

History shows that the working class wins gains through militant mass actions and massive strikes; that is what forces legislators to change the laws in the hope of cooling the workers out. But the Coordinadora's program seems deliberately to overlook specific appeals to working-class unity: the demand for jobs for all is conspicuously missing, in favor of non-specific labor "reform." The Teamsters strike and the support it got against United Parcel Service this August showed how widely popular the idea of fighting for decent full-time jobs for all workers would be!

The Coordinadora is not a genuine broad front of the oppressed, united by the need for common action. Although the masses who come to its demonstrations now have many points of view, the organization reflects only one, the liberal reformist view that pretends to be broad. Its program represents not the real working-class program, nor even its supporters' variety of views, but rather the position of lawyers, community organizers and other middle-class brokers

for the dominant U.S. capitalist system. And in fact, many of the featured speakers at the '96 rally in D.C. were Democratic politicians and liberal clergy — the usual suspects. No speakers or rally leaders offered any strategy counterposed to pressure-group rallies, lobbying and voting — although many marchers, particularly the youth, were looking for some other way forward and were very open to revolutionary ideas.

UNION BUREAUCRATS NO MODEL

The pro-capitalist union misleaders, who played a minor role in the demonstration, are even more dangerous to the masses than the community organizers. They control larger, more permanent organizations with more resources. And, the unions are organized by the very nature of capitalist production into a potentially cataclysmic force, despite their present shrinkage in numbers. The unions still organize the workers at the heart of capitalist production, profit-making and power. They can bring the system's production, transportation, cities, governmental administration and profits to a halt. The tremendous power of the unions is a central reason why the bureaucracy has acted so weakly. If they actually used it, the system could be turned upside-down. But acting as salesmen for labor power and loyal to capitalism, the bureaucrats refuse to use the unions' power.

The union officials have learned one thing from the UFWA experience of the '60's and early '70s — to repeat it. The latest model organizing drive is the Justice for Janitors campaign of the Service Employees (SEIU). The reputation of John Sweeney's current New Voices AFL-CIO leadership was built on this campaign to unionize building service workers. In Los Angeles, the janitors are mostly Latinos, many of them immigrants from Mexico and El Salvador.

Despite a union leadership oriented more toward middle-class public opinion than working-class action, the SEIU is growing, recruiting janitors and winning occasional contracts from previously non-union employers — with the same or slightly higher wages and benefits than before. It's not public opinion that moves the racist building owners but the spirit and solidarity of the workers.

Some of this spirit is based on the militant struggles of the drywall hangers in the late '80's. The drywallers in L.A. are mostly Mexican immigrants. They have the hardest job in housing construction, carrying heavy pre-cast plaster wall sections on their backs and fastening them in place, in the hot sun, on uneven ground, subject to firing if they lag for a moment. The struggle of these workers to form an association to force better wages and conditions from the contractors involved strikes, building-site occupations and mass pickets. Even though the contractors turned some militants in to La Migra and cops beat and arrested many, the workers' mass action in the streets won a contract.

The drywallers obviously needed support from the rest of the working class. To build real solidarity, as with the UFWA, would have meant fighting for supporting strikes. To get such solidarity in action, they would have had to fight union leaders who run from any strike. But their leadership called in the union tops and the drywallers ended up in the carpenter's union, a conservative craft outfit. The house-building contractors for the most part continue to hire non-union immigrant drywallers, pay them next to nothing and fire them at will.

Nevertheless, the example of militant Latino immigrant workers uniting previously unorganized sectors in the face of racist boss and cop terror foretells future developments in the

struggle. Likewise, the example of Latinos solidarizing with Blacks in the Los Angeles "riots" of 1992 (against the exoneration of the cops who mauled Rodney King) signaled the potential of Latino workers to forge a wider class unity.

REAL UNITY REQUIRES REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The opportunity for working class solidarity growing out of industrial actions by the trade unions has grown enormously. It isn't simply that the number of workers of color has gone up in the unions and that the racist restrictions in many unions have been cracked. Once engaged in militant struggles, white workers have proved that they can learn they need Black and Latino brothers and sisters.

The strike wave, wildcat and authorized, that tore through industry in the early 1970's established that white workers would follow militant Black workers in action. No longer were Black workers dependent on whether white workers would solidarize with them. In class actions, relations between the races were becoming more egalitarian. What is more, Black workers by virtue of the lessons learned in their struggle against oppression, were taking the lead. This accomplishment was evidence confirming Leon Trotsky's prediction in the 1930's that U.S. Blacks would be in the revolutionary vanguard out of proportion to their numbers.

We can say the same about Latino, Haitian, West Indian and other workers. As militancy returns to the unions, they are giving evidence of their developing role. Further, in demonstrations and discussions, it is becoming apparent that struggles both here and in their country of origin have taught lessons and made them more open to authentic communist ideas than many American-born workers, as of now.

It is inevitable that the class struggle, so long dammed up, will break through with a fury and depth that will stun impressionable people who have written off the organized working class. Such an upheaval will jettison not only the present bureaucratic leadership but its pale pink reform-minded imitators as well. In the course of struggle, the workers will learn the necessity for mass action. Like the drywallers, they will mobilize mass actions not confined by the bosses' laws or property rights.

Experience will also show that militant action that doesn't transcend their unions' ties to Democratic or Republican politicians and their capitalist bosses is doomed to fail: workers' and bosses' interests are fundamentally opposed. A leadership that really fights for the interests of immigrants and all workers must recognize this and fight for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a society of abundance and equality for all — socialism. However, that future development will only happen if all workers — immigrant and U.S.-born — who already understand this necessity have grouped together to build the alternative leadership, the revolutionary party of the working class.

To build the party and win the best fighters to it, slogans and militant dedication are not enough. Revolutionaries have to show that they have the program to unite immigrant and other workers in mass action. Isolated strikes often lose, but important strikes attract the attention and support of other workers, as in the UPS case. To make that support real and to defend workers from the ongoing capitalist attacks, revolutionaries point to the need for a *general strike*, which brings all profit-making to a halt and unites the working class and shows its real power.

The general strike will take up the struggles of all the dispossessed and show that demands in their interest are vital

to the success of the strike. Revolutionaries also point out that working-class demands transcend narrow trade unionism. Armed picket lines can stop particular scabs; the only way to stop a torrent of unemployed people from scabbing is to fight for jobs for the entire class. The only way to beat the bosses is by fighting for the rights of immigrants, Blacks, Latinos, women, the unemployed and all oppressed and exploited people. Revolutionaries will also show that a successful mass action in the form of the general strike poses the question of which class has the right to rule society, the actual producers or the profit-grubbers.

The revolutionary party stands for real internationalism — an international party with sections in each country. Capitalists are always telling U.S. workers that we must accept lower wages and worse conditions: they can hire workers at maquiladoras in Mexico along the U.S. border for 1/10 the wages. These conditions will never be resolved under capitalism: the only solution is workers' socialist revolution to do away with capitalism internationally.

The capitalists have made us one international working class while dividing us by nation and race to compete for their crumbs. We should act like one working class — for example, through cross-border strikes of workers in Mexico and the U.S. This is no fantasy: this past spring, truck drivers in France, Spain and Portugal struck together for shorter hours, higher wages and improved pensions; they won a partial victory. If our class can do it in Europe, so can we in the Americas! Such international strike action requires a fight to oust the "charros sindicales" ("trade union cowboys," the union bureaucrats) in both the U.S. and Mexico.

These are only a few of the ways that workers of all nationalities can organize to begin fighting. The fight will be long and difficult, as everyone understands. Revolutionaries in the LRP join in every struggle to defend the working class that we can. By struggling alongside our co-workers we will show over time in practice that only the revolutionary pro-

gram can defend our class from attacks, win gains and keep them. The best, most class-conscious fighters will come to see this and join with us to build the party that immigrants and all workers need. ●

*Smash All Attacks on Immigrant Workers!
Equal Rights for Immigrants! Open the Borders!
Democrats and Republicans: Two Parties of
Imperialism, War, Austerity and Racism!
Re-Create the Fourth International!
Workers' Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!*

"Open the Borders"

Revolutionaries under capitalism fight for the elimination of all barriers to workers' migration for a better life: working people should have the right to live legally where they please. In this sense we have raised the slogan, "Open the Borders!"

At this time, the LRP is discussing this slogan. There is no doubt that we oppose every restriction on the right of people to migrate wherever they wish. However, it is necessary to ask whether the slogan itself is utopian under capitalism, which will never permit borders genuinely open to immigrant workers.

Marxists do not call for "free trade" as an answer to chauvinist protective tariffs, because free trade is no longer possible in an imperialist-dominated world market. Does "Open the Borders" have the same problem, amounting to a call for free trade in the world labor market? On the other hand, would dropping the slogan give ground to the nationalists, whose worries about preserving national culture mask their chauvinism? These are the issues under discussion in the LRP.

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The Spartacist School of Falsification

The Spartacist League has acquired a nasty but well deserved reputation for slandering its opponents in the working class. They scorn Leon Trotsky's motto "Say what is" — tell the truth to the working class. Rather than argue the numerous substantive political differences they have with the League for the Revolutionary Party, for example, they habitually resort to invented scandal-mongering. Their aim is not just to falsify their opponents' political views but to surround them with such suspicion that anyone with even faintly progressive leanings will stay far away.

In this spirit, anticipating the U.S. tour last May by Leon Caesar of the Workers International Vanguard League of South Africa, hosted by the LRP, the SL printed a barrage of rather incredible slanders about the WIVL and the LRP in the May 2 *Workers Vanguard*. Expecting that revolutionary-minded Black people would be especially interested in attending talks by a South African revolutionist, the Spartacists figured the most effective tool for discrediting us would be flagrant charges of racism. These they made against both the LRP and the WIVL.

While the big lies come later, the first sign that the SL's article is not to be trusted is its headline: "LRP's South Africa Lash Up." What exactly this "lash-up" is the SL never explains; they simply imply that the LRP and WIVL have initiated an unprincipled organizational unity. In reality, the LRP and WIVL remain completely independent organizations; we have begun political discussions which we hope will lead to a future unification, as we explain in our article on Comrade Caesar's visit.

"OPPOSING RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND IMMIGRANTS"

When a group emerges like the WIVL, whose insistence on working-class independence and the building of a revolutionary party mark it as nearly unique not only in South Africa but the world, genuine communists want to enter into serious relations with it. But rather than argue the very substantial disagreements they have over the South African class struggle, the SL as usual turns to scandalizing. "In South Africa," they charge, the WIVL and LRP "oppose the struggle for democratic rights of women and immigrants."

The main "evidence" for this is the WIVL's attitude towards the organization People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD). The SL polemic is based on a leaflet written by the WIVL, "Hands Off PAGAD! Defend the Mass Movement!" At the time, PAGAD was under attack from the ANC-led "Government of National Unity" (GNU: the ANC's bloc with the apartheidist National Party). To understand the charges raised by the SL, we trace the events that led to the confrontation between PAGAD and the GNU.

PAGAD was formed several months before this confrontation by different groups and individuals in the coloured ("mixed-race") areas of Cape Town, South Africa's second largest city. It was a response to widespread anger at growing organized crime, which was spreading drugs and violence in the area, often in open cooperation with the police.

PAGAD was based in the coloured areas for two reasons: first, because while legal restrictions on movement by people of different so-called racial groups have been removed, the geographic segregation of peoples continues

because few can afford to move out of the old African and coloured townships; so local struggles are often confined to one people. Second, the problem of organized crime and hard drug dealing in Cape Town is not as bad in the African ("black") townships, where the mass anti-apartheid movements of the 1980's had largely superseded them by force.

The leadership of PAGAD was a mixture, ranging from "left" elements like a local COSATU militant and a self-styled Trotskyist, to conservative forces including a



Boston, December 1974: Thousands marched in defense of Black students. We were there, but SL smears LRP as "solidarizing with white racism." Using the same amalgam method, in the 1930's Stalinists called Trotsky a "fascist."

Catholic priest, "moderate" Muslims and a very small element from the reactionary Islamist organization Qibla. The presence of prominent Muslims is not surprising considering that many coloureds are Muslims and that these religious leaders would seek to manipulate the legitimate desire to put an end to the organized crime into a moralizing and dangerous call for law and order.

PAGAD's opposition to the criminals preying on the community immediately inspired broad and active support from the workers, who attended their demonstrations in the thousands. With the spirit of mass mobilization around community issues built up in the anti-apartheid struggle so strong, it is not surprising when even local issues like this gather strong support.

The apartheid regime had long worked with the gangs to

destabilize working-class areas and profit from crimes, and that has not changed in the "New South Africa." PAGAD led a demonstration to parliament and presented the names and addresses of leading criminals to the Justice Minister, demanding action and promising that PAGAD would take matters into its own hands if the government did not.

When after two months the government had done nothing, PAGAD began leading mass demonstrations to the houses of gang leaders, demanding that they stop their criminal activities. At one of these demonstrations, some provocateurs, probably from Qibla, killed one of Cape Town's most notorious organized-crime leaders.

This assassination was part of an effort by reactionary Muslims to take over PAGAD. The government, anxious to cover its complicity in organized crime as well as clamp down on any community mobilizations, used this killing as a pretext to crack down on PAGAD and the armed masses. A leaked intelligence report outlined the government's strategy: recognizing that PAGAD had wide support from a community which did not support the Muslim fundamentalists, the government would destroy the movement by initiating a media campaign labeling PAGAD a "Muslim extremist" movement and arresting prominent Muslim "fundamentalists." The masses who initially supported the movement would recoil at the idea of backing the fundamentalists, and the movement would lose momentum.

WIVL "TAILS COLOURED NATIONALISM"

At this point the WIVL wrote their leaflet. As any revolutionary should have done, the WIVL defended PAGAD from the state attacks, which were aimed against the masses' progressive movement, not just against Muslim reactionaries. To advise workers on the key issues, the WIVL wrote:

Hands Off PAGAD! Defend the Right of the Community to Bear Arms! The struggle needs to be broadened by inviting all community organizations and trade unions to join in the struggle against gangsterism and drugs. Beware of attempts by conservative forces to hijack the struggle or to make it the property of small groups. Dealing with the drug merchants and gangsters alone will not solve the problem. These problems grow out of the misery caused by the capitalist system which the ANC-led GNU is protecting. Therefore it is imperative to link the struggle against gangsterism and drugs with the broader struggle to

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overthrow the capitalist system, and to replace it with a just system, namely socialism.

The WIVL also warned against any call for more police. The SL's response was to accept the ANC-sponsored propaganda that PAGAD was never anything other than a reactionary Muslim fundamentalist movement and even more: that it was a "virulently anti-black" and anti-woman movement hostile to a government dominated by Africans. Not even the ANC accused PAGAD of such things! The WIVL, the SL says, "tails a 'coloured nationalism'" by defending PAGAD.

This is an appalling slander, not only of the WIVL but of the masses of workers who participated in the movement and who want nothing to do with any "coloured nationalism." It would not have occurred to any worker attending the big PAGAD demonstrations that they were there for any other reason than to stop the crimes of the big gang leaders, who were terrorizing working-class communities even though they were coloured like themselves.

Even the bourgeois media was occasionally forced to note that Muslim fundamentalists were at the time trying to take over PAGAD. Here is how South Africa's leading liberal capitalist newspaper described it:

Insiders say, that cracks are appearing in the movement and that it is attempting to distance itself from the militant faction which has invaded it. Pagad members, police intelligence and Muslim clergy have warned that Qibla is attempting to hijack Pagad. Observers believe Qibla has only a handful of followers to infiltrate into Pagad, but they note that people who have now assumed the mantle of leadership in the organization are Qibla members. (Weekly Mail and Guardian, Aug. 16, 1996.)

The government's campaign against PAGAD succeeded in both dissipating the popular movement very quickly and helping the Muslim reactionaries take over PAGAD. It was not long before PAGAD was nothing but a Muslim reactionary sect, and the WIVL promptly withdrew its defense proposal. This fact was made clear to the SL, but they ignore it.

The SL is also extremely dishonest about the content of the WIVL's leaflet. A reader of their article could reasonably conclude that the WIVL had wholeheartedly supported PAGAD and ignored the reactionaries within it. On the contrary, as the quotes above show, the WIVL leaflet warned against the threat of PAGAD being taken over by reactionaries, encouraged the participation of the workers and their organizations (the unions and civics) to prevent this, and criticized PAGAD for aiming its struggle against criminals alone and not the capitalist system that breeds crime.

"BLOCKING WITH APARTHEID-FINANCED FORCES"

The Spartacists also try to hold the WIVL responsible for political crimes committed by the international they split from, the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (WIRFI). For one, the Namibian section of the WIRFI participated in the 1989 elections in a bloc called the UDF, which included reactionaries secretly funded by the South African apartheid government. Citing the WIVL's statement that "From the moment of our first contact with the International, we opposed and criticized the opportunist alliance with the UDF in Namibia," *WV* writes dramatically:

But the elections in Namibia took place in 1989, two years before the leaders of what is now the WIVL affiliated to the WIRFI. This means that even though they knew beforehand that Slaughter's Namibian section was in an elector-

al bloc with forces financed by apartheid, they joined the WIRFI anyway. They then remained in the same organization with Slaughter and his Namibian group for five years. Now they want to pass themselves off as principled Leninists!

To tar the WIVL with the same brush as the WIRFI, the SL deliberately withholds information. When the Cape Town comrades first met with the WIRFI's leader Cliff Slaughter, they expressed their opposition to the Namibian policy. Slaughter told them that he also opposed the position but that he'd heard about it too late to prevent it. Slaughter was lying — he and the WIRFI supported the position. But the comrades took Slaughter's word and agreed to join the WIRFI as long as a balance sheet of the Namibian action was made and the position repudiated.

Despite many requests by the WIVL comrades, no balance sheet was ever made. At the same time, they were becoming increasingly aware of their political differences with the WIRFI leadership. But instead of immediately splitting, they stayed to fight for their political views, in the hope of winning other WIRFI members to revolutionary politics. Given that the future WIVL members had little experience with the maneuverist hacks who dominate Western pseudo-Trotskyist groups, the faction fight had to be a learning experience for them, one that would help answer the international questions they knew existed.

Meanwhile, wary of being associated with the WIRFI's actions in Namibia and elsewhere but not wanting to give the WIRFI leaders a pretext to expel them, the WIVL comrades told every group they met that they opposed the Namibian position and were fighting the WIRFI leadership about it. When we in the LRP met the WIVL comrades for the first time in 1993, we had been the first to expose the Namibian group's 1989 position in print (see PR 36), and we raised the question with them. The WIVL comrades immediately declared their opposition to the Namibian line and explained that they were fighting the WIRFI leadership about it.

Another group the WIVL told was the Spartacists, in their first meeting in 1994 — three years before the *WV* article. Moreover, SL members have had meetings with the WIVL comrades several times since and never raised this slanderous "criticism" before.

"SOLIDARIZING WITH WHITE RACISM"

The SL's main charge against the LRP is that we opposed school busing in Boston in the 1970's and were thereby in "an objective bloc with outright racist scum" and "solidarizing with white racism." In fact, as the SL liars know, we called for armed defense of the school buses under violent attack by racist mobs. In other words, we were for shooting racists who attacked Black youth. Some "solidarity"!

At the time the founding members of the LRP were in the Revolutionary Socialist League. The RSL's newspaper repeatedly ran the headline "Defend the Black Students!" And we traveled to Boston to actively participate in anti-racist demonstrations and actions.

That is because authentic Trotskyists fight for every democratic and egalitarian demand by oppressed peoples. As internationalists, we favor the right of oppressed nationalities to secede if they so choose. Likewise, as interracialists, we defend the right of oppressed American Blacks, who are not a separate nation, to equality. (For a full discussion, see our pamphlet *Marxism, Interracialism and the Black Struggle*.) Accordingly, we have always defended the right of Black students to get an equal education and to go to schools of

their choice, either in their own communities or outside.

Such a fight for democratic rights had nothing in common with government school "integration" plans in general nor the specific variant imposed by Judge Garrity in Boston. This plan was based on the patronizing theory that Black students could learn only if they rubbed shoulders with whites. Garrity helped shut down 20 schools in Black neighborhoods that were insufficiently "integrated." School funding was slashed and only a token construction of new buildings was authorized. As usual, such cutbacks disproportionately affected Blacks.

"BLACK LUMPEN YOUTH"

What riles the Spartacists is that we don't swallow their line of "revolutionary integrationism" as an answer to segregation and inequality, which in fact is nothing more than a means to tail bourgeois integrationism. In Boston, the SL supported the government's plan for the bourgeois courts to determine the distribution of Black students, through a busing scheme enforced by the police. Judge Garrity's plan sent even unwilling Black youth into hostile city schools as cannon fodder to carry out the liberals' paternalist and racist social engineering goals.

The Spartacists' true attitude toward Black youth is revealed in this passage from their press:

The ghetto schools are hell holes not because of their geographical location, but because they serve as prison camps for restless black lumpen youth. Under the present conditions of rampant white racism, the presence of significant numbers of white students could be an at least minimally effective way of introducing an element of change into the nature of the ghetto schools. If an all-black school becomes 20 percent white, the administration, teachers and the cops will behave rather differently.

On the other hand, all the talk about quality education — on both side of the busing conflict — is bourgeois idealist hogwash. Ghetto schools do not teach because there are no jobs, no careers for the products of those schools. Black lumpen youth cannot use the knowledge normally transmitted through the public school system to get ahead in American society. Doubling the budget for ghetto schools would have little effect on the cultural level of the black masses and even less effect on their economic situation. As long as blacks remain a race-color caste, concentrated at the bottom of America society and imprisoned in ghettos, changes in formal education will have only a marginal effect on black people. (*Young Spartacus*, Sept. 1974, reprinted in the pamphlet *The Fight to Implement Busing*.)

The contempt for Black youth here is overwhelming. They are equated throughout with what Marx called "lumpenproletarians," elements who prey off the working class, as if there were no such thing as Black workers. Combined with the "rubbing-shoulders" notion is the "hostage" theory, that the capitalists and their agents (administrators, cops) as well as teachers can be tricked into providing decent schools if a handful of white students are present. Given the wave of cutbacks in education and all public services that the bourgeoisie was embarking on in the 1970's, this notion is a pipedream that any Marxist should have been combatting.

While denying that the miserable funding of Black schools was a real problem, the Spartacists added a call for busing into the middle- and upper-class suburbs. That suggests the cause of rotten education is geographical, not capitalism's inherent need to segregate youth by class — and in

the U.S. especially, by race. (If Black youth were bused to white suburbs, middle-class whites would still find separate schools for their kids.)

It is no accident that after all the school integration schemes of the 1970's, schools in the U.S. today are more segregated than they were before. The capitalist state — its racist cops, its paternalist judges — defends the system's need to segregate and underfund Black schools and housing to enforce superexploitation. That's who the SL blocked with in the name of "revolutionary integrationism."

The Spartacist argument comes down to the claim that to oppose bourgeois integrationism is to support white racists. Further proof that this is a lie can be found in the writings of Malcolm X. Although he remained a separatist in significant ways (a position we oppose) after he was thrown out of the Nation of Islam, he opposed both segregation and integrationism. And he saw the racist nature of these strategies. Speaking in 1964, he said:

This doesn't mean I'm for a segregated school system. We are well aware of the crippled minds that are produced by a segregated school system.

And on the other hand:

So, what the integrationists, in my opinion, are saying, when they say that whites and blacks must go to school together, is that the whites are so much superior that just their presence in the black classroom balances it out. I can't go along with that. (By Any Means Necessary, pp. 16-17.)

We challenge the SL: Was Malcolm in "an objective bloc with racist scum"?

Time and again, Leon Trotsky answered pro-Stalinist defenders of the Popular Front who screeched that he was blocking with fascists because he exposed the Communist Party's support for liberal bourgeois programs. He decried such "false amalgams." The pseudo-Trotskyist Spartacists use the same methods Trotsky fought.

"LRP SHOULD HAVE OPPOSED THE NORTH"

Taking slander to the point of absurdity, the Spartacists dig up "another flagrant example of the LRP's solidarizing with white racism." They derive this gem from a photo caption in our magazine in 1977:

U.S. flag above Confederate banner atop state capitol building in Montgomery, Alabama, symbolizes dominance of Northern capital in the South.

The Spartacists call this assertion "grotesque" and deduce from it that "the LRP should have opposed the Northern Union forces in the Civil War."

The Spartacists do not try to deny that Northern capital was dominant after the Civil War, the point of the article: they simply assume that by saying so we sympathize with the Southern bourgeoisie. If they had bothered to read our arti-

cle instead of just looking at the pictures, they would find that we fully supported the Black struggle before, during and after slavery, exactly as Marx and all Marxists have always done. We described how Northern capitalists, as senior partners, finalized their deal with the Southern bourgeoisie, their junior partners, in 1877, and thereby finalized their betrayal of Reconstruction and the Black masses. The flags symbolized that historic reality.

We are by no means to first communists to make this point. The resolution on the Black Question of the Fourth Congress of the Third International said as follows:

The Civil War was not a war for the emancipation of the blacks but a war for the preservation of the industrial hegemony of the North.

Presumably the SL would say that Lenin and Trotsky too should have been on the side of the slaveholding South.

"TAILING FARRAKHAN"

Given our opposition to bourgeois integrationism, the Spartacists assert that "the LRP's opposition to integration was simply a capitulation to black nationalists ...," in particular Louis Farrakhan. To prove their point, they quote from our article criticizing the Million Man March:

In the future, Farrakhan may be forced to raise militant demands and call meaningful actions, in order to hold leadership when mass struggles break out. In that case revolutionaries would join in common action, always warning against Farrakhan's treacherous pro-capitalist leadership.

Significantly, they leave out the sentences that immediately preceded this:

Farrakhan and his followers could come under violent attack or repression by the capitalist state. It would then be necessary for revolutionary workers to defend him — for the real intended target would be the Black masses. (PR 50.)

Selective quoting aside, do the Spartacists really mean to disagree with what we wrote? Are they so pro-integration that they would *not* join in mass actions if Farrakhan was forced by the Black masses against his will to fight back? Would they really not defend even the most pro-capitalist Black leader if he and his followers were under attack by the bourgeois state? We know the Spartacists are rotten, but even they haven't yet proved they would bow to bourgeois dictates that far. No, here they're just trying to score a debaters' point by attacking us for an elementary revolutionary policy that even they haven't broken from yet.

"OPPOSING ANTI-KLAN ACTIONS"

The Spartacists charge us with an "ingrained hostility to any real struggle in defense of blacks and other minorities";

Marxism, Interracialism and the Black Struggle

A Proletarian Revolution pamphlet by Sy Landy

An overview of the Marxist understanding of revolutionary proletarian interracialism and the historical course of the U.S. Black struggle. The pamphlet discusses the idea of Black liberation through socialist revolution as the alternative to integrationism and nationalism, whose failure it analyzes in detail.

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allegedly we opposed various actions against the racist Ku

Klux Klan. But the only evidence they offer for this lie refers to one demonstration that the Spartacists initiated in 1982 in Washington, D.C. This charge is totally false: we sent a delegation that took part in the D.C. mobilization. But we also pointed out that the rally wasn't a "united front with the trade unions" as the Spartacists claim. We wrote at the time:

The Spartacist rally, although well carried out from a technical point of view in the face of hostile cops, embodied a political fraud. Its publicity boasted the names of ... union and black leaders, whose statement promised to "help build a mass labor-black demonstration against the Klan." But of course these luminaries did nothing of the kind; few of them were even present in Washington. ... The labor fakers were handed a cheap claim to a militancy they never earned. (PR 18.)

Because we exposed their political beautification of the bureaucrats, the Spartacists resort to the lie that we stood against the anti-Klan mobilization.

The claim that we oppose anti-Klan actions is ridiculous — especially in view of the fact that we actively participated, along with the Spartacists and others, in the recent defense of the Chicago "Anti-Klan Three," falsely charged with assault and battery against the cops at a Klan rally last summer. The same issue of *Workers Vanguard* that says we oppose anti-Klan actions on another page lists the LRP as

Police Terror

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the line. We expect these brutal atrocities because we know that police brutality happens every day, in every city.

The politicians talk about a stronger Civilian Complaint Review Board. But the fact is that this has been tried time and again in many cities. While the cops don't like them, community boards have failed to stem the tide of police terror. In fact, they have often covered up police crimes, just like the courts.

Nevertheless, better cops and a stronger review board pretty much sums up the Democratic Party solution, offered by mayoral candidates Ruth Messinger and Al Sharpton. Messinger showed her true colors when she originally praised Giuliani's response to the Louima outrage — only later did she realize it was politically useful to criticize him. Given Sharpton's association with the fight against police brutality, the Board Of Elections' belated discovery that Sharpton lacked the votes for a runoff primary against Messinger leaves the suspicion that the political powers-that-be are doing what they can to make the Louima case disappear as quickly as possible.

YOU CAN'T REFORM THE COPS

At the August 16 demo over the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall, Sharpton joined the other speakers in denouncing the "bad apples." But he also called for systemic change. This would seem like a direct contradiction, but in reality Sharpton uses this rhetoric to maintain the support of his base. He doesn't mean it, as his actual proposals prove.

Sharpton has called for a police chief like former Democratic Mayor David Dinkins' commissioner Raymond Kelly — who is so trusted by the ruling class that he was sent by the

one of the participating organizations in Chicago!

The Spartacists are upset that even when joining with them in defense work, we maintain our revolutionary politics: we criticized the method of the Spartacists' front group, the Partisan Defense Committee, for misusing the united front tactic and giving undue credit to union bureaucrats and Democratic Party politicians. (See "Defend Chicago Anti-Klan Militants" in *PR* 53.) The Spartacists, as usual, refuse to respond to the political issues; their only answer is slander.

Unfortunately, as Lenin once observed, a one-line falsehood can require pages of refutation. We have taken up in detail the SL's main slanders and dealt with others briefly. Still other charges the Spartacists raise, like those relating to the questions of Stalinism and Bosnia, we have analyzed at length in the past — without any political response by the SL.

The charge of racism or collaboration with racists is one of the most serious that can be raised in the United States, a country whose economic and imperial power rests on superexploiting Black labor. In South Africa, the accusation of counterposing coloured nationalism to black rule is equally damaging. No serious left organization raises such matters lightly, without powerful evidence. But the Spartacist League flings them about casually, with no evidence at all. Their method deserves the contempt of all who believe that "saying what is" is indispensable to revolutionary politics. ●

U.S. government to train Haiti's notorious cops! Sharpton also calls for strict residency laws for police, but that won't do anything either: housing cops living in the projects are no better. Haitians and West Indians in Brooklyn have already experienced brutality from cops who live in the city, Black and Latino as well as white.

The one thing Giuliani and all the Democrats really do agree on is that capitalism must have its police force! The Democrats want to turn our rage against the system into votes for them to run the system.

Many working-class people sometimes say the same thing as the politicians: "There are good cops as well as bad cops and we need a really independent review board to keep the cops in line." But most people no longer really believe this. They go along with it at times — because what else can we do? If one racist psycho cop is punished, if one victim gets monetary compensation, if one murder is prevented — perhaps that's the best that can be expected. Underneath, people know that when one scandal blows over, the media moves on to something else.

But after all, you can't get rid of the whole police department, can you? You can't get rid of the whole system, and the state too? That's the core of the problem. To really solve it, yes, we do have to get rid of the whole police department and the system. For it is true that capitalism can't abolish its police force. The way to end police brutality once and for all is to overthrow the capitalist system, for the system's cops will do everything necessary to defend capitalist property and capitalist exploitation — torture and murder included.

CRIME RAVAGES WORKING CLASS

Many workers, including Blacks, accept the idea that the police are at least a partial solution to the scourge of crime, even though they don't trust cops. Giuliani's press releases to the contrary, the "quality of life" in poor neighborhoods and

the plague of street crime today have gotten worse, not better. Muggings, rapes, robberies and murders are not only getting worse and more violent; crime has turned living into a virtual nightmare for many, especially the most oppressed who live in the slums and ghettos. Workers rightly recognize that you cannot just talk about abolishing police unless you live in a fantasy land.

However, the working class cannot count on the existing police for defense against street crime. In fact, as agents of the capitalist system that breeds crime, the police are part of the problem and not its solution. A revolutionary workers' state that replaces capitalist rule would have its own workers' militia, a force that would serve to protect the working class for a change, including the actual prevention of street crime and racist and anti-social acts.

Revolutionaries understand that all the current attacks are connected. The capitalist profit system is rotting. To keep profits up, the capitalists must intensify their exploitation of the working class. Cuts to social services, anti-immigrant legislation, slave-labor workfare schemes, attacks on unions and the replacement of full-time jobs with low-wage part-time jobs have all struck at the entire working class. Racism and anti-immigrant chauvinism are the leading edge of the attacks, for good reason. The best way to increase exploitation is by turning Blacks, Latinos and immigrants into raw material for superexploitation, so that all wages and conditions are brought down.

WORKING-CLASS UNITY

There is more. Nothing scares the ruling class more than the potential of a united working class. To prevent us from rising up united, they encourage racial division and anti-immigrant chauvinism, demonizing people of color. They must also keep people of color permanently intimidated. That's where the racist police come in. They're encouraged to target Blacks, Latinos and immigrants to keep them bowed down. Since that's the cops' job, no wonder they attract power-tripping thugs, racists and other scum. And cop brutality is encouraged by the capitalists through their politicians and media, who create an atmosphere where Blacks and Latinos are deemed worthless and expendable.

The capitalists hope that white workers will stay pacified because they're not getting hit as badly as people of color — even though many of them are being downsized to death. If white workers do get angry, the bosses hope that racism will prevent them from uniting with their fellow workers of color. It is because racism is so strong that the connection between racism and exploitation has not been obvious. White workers have to be convinced that they must fight against racism to be able to defend themselves against the bosses' plan.

In fact the capitalists' divide-and-conquer plan can be defeated. The working class and poor can unite across racial, national and ethnic divisions. Surveys following the torture of Abner Louima confirm that white people were extremely sympathetic to the case and repulsed by the police action, just as they were after the beating of Rodney King.

Indeed, the connection between racism, chauvinism and exploitation is becoming harder to disguise. Take the recent UPS strike. Black, Latino and white workers joined together in a common fight against the scheme of setting better paid full time workers against low wage part timers. When the cops attacked any of them on the picket line, they all fought back together. It was clear that workers of all races and nationalities were on one side, and that the cops of all races

and nationalities were on the other side, with the bosses and the government. Had the struggle continued, inevitably cop clashes with the workers would have intensified and the connection between the attacks on the Haitian community in Brooklyn and workers on strike would have been made.

Because of worsening economic conditions, more and more struggles like the UPS strike are on the horizon. In future struggles, as in the past historic fights to build the



unions and demand rights for the unemployed in the 1930's, the clashes will become more violent. Police brutality won't be limited to Blacks and Latinos.

What's needed is a leadership that uses every opportunity to mobilize the working class based on its common interests. The failure of all the major unions in New York to mobilize their membership against the torture of Abner Louima has resulted in only a small presence of either U.S. Blacks, Latinos or whites at the protests so far. This is an indictment of the reactionary labor union bureaucracy and further proof that the unions need revolutionary leadership.

There are key concrete steps that revolutionary-minded people should take to start turning this situation around. The demonstrations in support of Louima have been very important but they are not enough. Just as we must link the issue of exploitation with police brutality, we must take the issue of fighting police brutality into the working class' most powerful organizations: the unions.

NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE, NO PROFITS!

We have to start advocating the need not only for rallies but for a one day general strike to be called whenever such

atrocities occur. This fight has to be taken into the unions as well as the community organizations. Politicians like Sharpton say: "No Justice, No Peace." But this can mean little more than just a lot of noise, which eventually dies down. Even riots like in L.A. were not able to achieve lasting gains, because they didn't target the ruling class in an organized way.

We say — "*No Justice, No Peace, No Profits!*" Every time there is an cop atrocity, the city should be shut down. The capitalists may not listen to Black and Brown, but they listen to green. A general strike in New York would stop profit-making in its tracks and bring Wall Street to its shaky knees.

This one-day general strike tactic is part of an overall approach. The LRP has been advancing the need for a general strike in New York and across this country for years. We see the general strike as the best way to mobilize the working class in mass action against the capitalist attacks. Based on the power and organization of workers in industry, a general strike would show the power of a united working class to stop this rotten system of oppression and injustice. A general strike of all workers — Black, Latino and white, employed and unemployed — could not only halt the current attacks, but would show who really makes society run. It would point the way to the only real permanent defense of the working class — socialist revolution. It would be a gigantic step toward the overthrow of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy and the building of the revolutionary party of the working class.

REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY AND SELF-DEFENSE

Every outrage of police brutality must be protested, exposed and fought. The right of all working people to defend themselves by any means necessary must be reclaimed. However, the Haitian community and other people under siege cannot wait for the rise in consciousness in the working class at large to start defending themselves. We therefore advocate community defense guards to fend off attacks when they occur. They are not a permanent solution, but they are necessary and can serve as an example to the whole working class as to what must be done. It is an important step in developing working class awareness of the need for a class-wide defense against the cops and the system. Even though most people aren't convinced of it today, we also argue for the need for mass armed self-defense by the entire working class.

We fight for the working class as a whole to see the need to fight police brutality and racism and not leave particular communities stranded. The most effective solution starts by organizing the building of workers' defense guards at the point of production, where the working class has organized strength. When the general class struggle heats up, revolutionaries will advocate turning such defense guards into a

Armed Self-Defense and the Revolutionary Program

Articles from *Proletarian Revolution* by Matthew Richardson: "Race, Class and Cop Brutality," "Black Struggle Arms Itself" and "Armed Self-Defense and the Revolutionary Program"

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workers' militia, an alternative to the capitalist police and National Guard.

Mass struggles can show the power the working class has when it is united. Indeed the masses have the power to overthrow the entire capitalist system and build a new society free of exploitation and oppression. The world's productive forces have reached the point where all forms of want can be eliminated. Humanity can enjoy a society of abundance and peace.

But it requires proletarian (working-class) revolution to build workers' states with the exploited and oppressed masses on top, running society in their interests, planning the economy to produce for their needs and not for profits. That is the road to a classless communist society, a world far from the collapsed fake-socialism of Stalinist Russia, China and Eastern Europe which exploited the working classes in the interest of statified capitalism.

What is needed is a party of revolutionary socialists from among the working class to lead these struggles. That is what we in the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) are dedicated to. We participate in all struggles, proposing the best way forward and seeking to educate fellow workers that only socialism can solve the problems we face. We work to train ourselves in politics to build a party of socialists who can lead the coming revolution. And we seek to link up with like minded socialists around the world to build a world revolutionary party to lead the struggle for socialism.

In this leaflet we have sought to address some of the important aspects of the vital issue of police brutality and revolutionary struggle. If you are interested in these ideas, talk to our supporters, read our magazine *Proletarian Revolution*, and contact us.

***Stop Police Terror! Stop Racist and Anti-Immigrant Attacks!
For the Right of Armed Self-Defense!
Democrats Are No Alternative to Republicans!
General Strike Against the Capitalist Attacks!
Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!
Workers' Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!***

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Vol. 6, No. 4

Blows Against the Empire: Trotskyism in Ceylon, 1935-1964

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party was an outstanding component of the world Trotskyist movement. It was a major force in the political scene of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), led large and militant trade unions and strikes, and had at one point 12 members of parliament and one senator.

This book covers the history of the LSSP from its foundation to its expulsion from the Fourth International after it joined a coalition government.

Price (including postage): £9.95. Send checks or International Money Orders in Pounds Sterling, made payable to Socialist Platform, Ltd., BCM Box 7646, London WC1N 3XX, England.

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Fall 1997

The Fight Against Police Terror

We reprint here an edited version of an LRP leaflet distributed in New York in mass rallies against the gruesome torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima by cops at the 70th police precinct in Brooklyn, New York City.

According to reports, on August 9 Louima somehow got involved in a verbal dispute with cops outside a nightclub in the mostly Haitian and West Indian immigrant Flatbush section of Brooklyn. He was booked, beaten on the way to the station and then tortured to near death within the blue walls.

A storm of outrage followed the exposure of the details a few days later. Going beyond "police norms," the cops not only beat Louima but jammed a plunger up his rectum, damaging his bladder, intestines and spleen. The plunger was then jammed into his mouth, breaking his teeth.

There has been a mass outpouring of protest, but the pro-capitalist leaders have been able to manipulate sentiments in order to preserve stability, i.e. the status quo. A prime example: Republican Rudy Giuliani was elected mayor in large part on the basis of get-tough-on-crime policies and catering to the anger within the racist police force at having to serve under a Black mayor, David Dinkins. However, the Louima case was so despicable and transparent that this time he was quick to denounce the cops involved rather than risk a riot — at a time so close to the mayoral elections.

Meanwhile, Democratic politicians like Al Sharpton, and a host of community leaders, denounced the cops involved — while conveniently focusing on getting rid of the Republican administration as the solution to police brutality. The masses of protesters, however, know from direct experience that the problem is not just a few cops and the Republicans but the system itself. A key task of revolutionaries is to not only build the fight against police brutality but to use the militancy of the struggle to expose the current reform leadership to the ranks of the movement. This cannot be accomplished through words alone. Leaders like Sharpton speak out of both sides of their mouths: they talk radical to appease an angry audience — and then pose mealy-mouthed reforms when it gets down to action.

As working-class revolutionaries, we not only put out literature providing the necessary revolutionary analysis, but we seek to expose reformism in practice. In the current situation, a fight to demand labor action against police brutality is key; we are eager to join with others in fighting for the powerful response only the trade unions can give. To this end we not only support the idea of rallies but also pose the need to fight for a general strike.

As well, as our leaflet indicates, we have been looking for opportunities to advocate organized self-defense instead of the hopeless community review boards. This is another way to drive a wedge between the interests of the ranks and the pro-capitalist community leaders whose opposition to the cops is paper thin. (See the LRP report on page 2 for more information on our activity.)



Stop Police Terror! Stop Racist and Anti-Immigrant Attacks!

Giuliani says the torture of Abner Louima wasn't a case of police brutality, but a crime. But isn't police brutality a crime? Not on his beat. He's just mad that the cops at the 70th went as far as torturing Louima to near death. If they had just beaten him, or even shot him, the cops could have said that it happened when he was resisting arrest ... like they always do. Now Giuliani talks about a sham task force and sensitivity training.

The Democratic Party politicians argue that the question is the "few bad apples" on the police force. We're not buying
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