

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



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Re-Create
the Fourth International

Showdown in New York Transit

In mid-December, following two unprecedented mass mobilizations, thousands of New York City bus and subway workers voted unanimously at a tumultuous general membership meeting to strike. They did so in defiance both of New York State's Taylor Law prohibiting public sector strikes, and of draconian injunctions obtained by Mayor Giuliani, the Metropolitan Transit Authority and the Democratic state attorney general. The ruling class and its media agents covered before the strike threat, a show of working-class strength, warning of its threat to life, limb and profits.

For a brief moment, Transport Workers Local 100 reminded the capitalists and the workers themselves of the enormous power of the working class when it unites in struggle. This would have been no ordinary strike but a blow at Wall Street, the financial center of American capitalism. As tens of thousands of transit workers stood ready to shut down the buses and subways and cripple the capitalists' Christmas profiteering and millennium celebrations, the ruling class engaged in a frenzy of denunciations and turned to the repressive power of the state to prevent a walkout.

With the transit contract running out at midnight on December 14, Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Pesce signed two restraining orders. The harshest was demanded by the Mayor: it called for fining the union \$1 million for the first strike day, with fines doubling each successive day. In addition, individual members faced daily fines starting at \$25,000, likewise doubling each day. These penalties were to be incurred not just for actual strike action but for making any statements that could be interpreted as "directing, calling, causing, authorizing, instigating, conducting, continuing, encouraging, threatening, participating in, assisting in, or approving of any strike, work stoppage, sick-out, slowdown, refusal to work as assigned, sabotage, vandalism, picketing with the intent to encourage any of these acts, or any other concerted activity intended to or tending to interrupt the nor-



mal and regular operations." Under this monstrous gag order, workers could not even say the word "strike."

WORKERS DEFY MAYOR, JUDGE, BOSSES

In the teeth of this blatant violation of free speech and union rights, thousands of workers told Giuliani, the judge and the bosses to go to hell. Defying the injunction and their own cowardly union leaders, above all Local 100 President Willie James and TWU national head Sonny Hall, the workers' mass meeting adopted by acclamation - twice! - a

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LRP/COFI Report

DEFEND MUMIA! THE TIME IS NOW

After nearly two decades, the struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal is indeed approaching the final stage. It comes to this: either a movement will succeed in its demand for a new trial and his freedom, or he will be executed in a vicious act of racist state terror. We urge our readers to renew their commitment to this struggle. Our viewpoint is that the most successful defense can be built through placing demands on the misleadership of major organizations – unions, civil rights and other Black and Latino organizations that claim to be fighting racism – to mobilize their resources and get their members out on the streets for Mumia. (See PR 59 for a full discussion.)

LRPers have attended meetings and demos in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington and Minneapolis. We have been fighting to get action in the unions. We have also helped to build educationals in high schools and colleges. Please get in touch if you are interested in working with us!

CHICAGO LRP

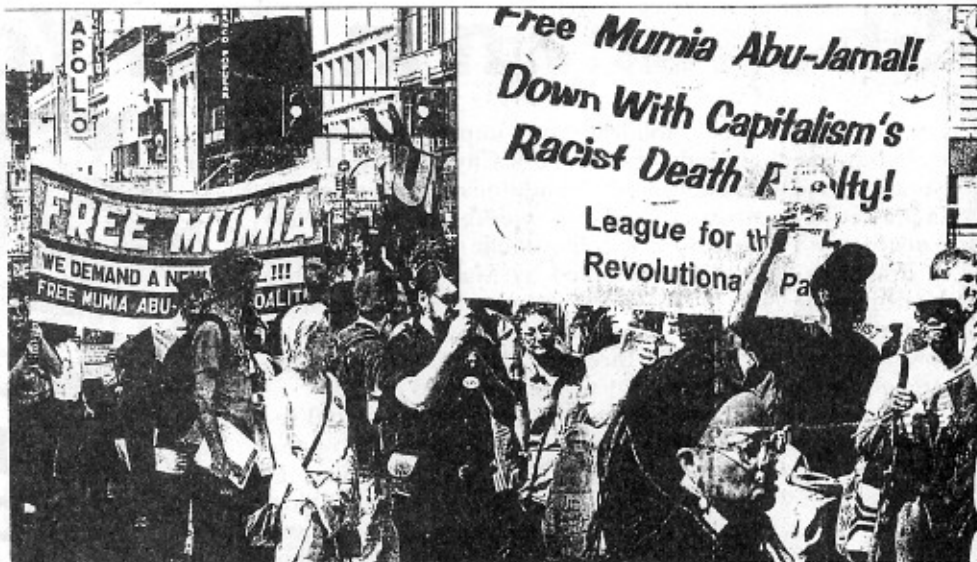
An LRP supporter is running for associate delegate in the Chicago Teachers Union on a platform of mass action and the fight for a general strike – as opposed to both the notorious sellout leadership of Thomas Reece and the reformist politics of the two main opposition groups in the union. (Write in for a sample bulletin.)

The Chicago LRP joined over 600 protesters outraged by the growing trend of anti-gay violence to commemorate the murdered Matthew Shepard. LRPers also have attended marches over the issue of Puerto Rican political prisoners, including the frame-up of Dr. José Solís. (Our leaflet is on our website.) We also participated in marches demanding “U.S. Navy Out of Vieques,” a protest against U.S. aid to

Colombia, and protests against the slaughter of East Timorese by the Indonesian regime.

WASHINGTON LRP

The LRP was actively involved in planning for a counter-demonstration against a rally by the neo-Nazi “Knights of Freedom American Nationalist Party.” In contrast to the ISO, which pleaded for the police to revoke the Nazis’ permit and hushed up any discussion of self-defense against the Nazis or their police protectors, we stood for no reliance on



the state, and for taking the issue to the unions and to working people through direct leafleting on the streets. The passive course advocated by the ISO won out, and the result was a largely white middle-class rally of some 500 people, faced down by thousands of cops. The only salvation was that this particular group of Nazis was laughably disorganized and cowardly, and didn't even bother to show up. (Our leaflet is available on request.)

Another important event was a national march for immigrant rights, which brought out thousands of working-class marchers from across the nation and of many nationalities, especially Latinos. The politics pushed by the lawyers and union bureaucrats leading the march consisted mostly of pleading with Congress; yet many in the crowd were friendly

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How to Reach Us

LRP Central Office	P.O. Box 3573 New York, NY 10008-3573 (212)-330-917 e-mail: LRPNYC@earthlink.net website: www.LRP-COFI.org
Chicago	(773)-463-1340
Washington, D.C.	(202)-736-3778
Australia	League Press P.O. Box 578 Carlton South, Vic. 3053
Germany	KOVI-BRD c/o Buchladen 'Le Sabot' Breitestr. 76 53111, Bonn e-mail: KOVI.BRD@t-online.de

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Battle over Seattle



The "Battle in Seattle" – between tens of thousands of union workers and largely middle-class activists who disrupted the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Seattle police who gassed, beat and shot them with rubber bullets – has evoked widely disparate responses on the left.

These reactions reflect what could become a new sorting-out process within the reformist and centrist left as it reacts to these events. The unexpectedly large protest expressed a popular desire for political change developing beneath the surface of day-to-day events. Newly revived forces, angrily hostile to the status quo, are beginning to make their presence felt. As is usual at such a beginning point, the leadership of the protesters was pro-capitalist and the consciousness of the participants was mixed and confused.

As Marxists know, action precedes consciousness rather than vice versa. The Seattle explosion, and the warm reception it received by the working class in the U.S. as well as abroad, has already made its impact on the outlook not only of the developing movement itself, but on those leftists who seek to influence and even lead future struggles against the capitalist system.

LEFT DIVIDED OVER SEATTLE

On one side, the massive protest is hailed as an epochal turn in U.S. politics – a new "Greenie-Sweeney" alliance between organized labor and middle-class college-age activists, united in common struggle against a central institution of capitalist domination. The Communist Party drew reformist and electoralist conclusions, asserting that the main lesson was the ability of the "labor-led coalition" to "inflict a sweeping defeat on the GOP on Nov. 7, 2000." The ISO went further, claiming that "the main trend at the meetings in Seattle was firmly anti-capitalist" – as usual, deliberately mistaking populism for conscious opposition to capitalism.

On the other side, the protest is condemned as a chauvinist bloc with the Democrats aimed at bolstering U.S. imperialism; actions they don't control often frighten the more rigid elements on the left. The Socialist Workers Party wrote:

"The actions, and the participation of the demonstrators – whether unionists or others – had no redeeming value whatever from the point of view of the interests of working people." The Spartacists boasted of their non-participation, denouncing the protest as "overwhelmingly a mobilization of the Democratic Party" and "a grotesque nationalist festival."

The WTO certainly deserves outraged protests. Founded in 1995, it is one of several institutions (like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) run by the imperialist powers, the U.S. in the lead, to preserve their domination of the globe and enforce the superexploitation of the vast majority of the world's people. It defends a capitalist system that kills 30 million people a year through starvation despite plentiful food production, and in which less than 10 percent of the world's population lives above official poverty levels.

IMPERIALISM SET BACK

The WTO's specific role is to rule on and often ban labor safeguards, health and safety laws, government food subsidies, environmental protection and anything else that gets in the way of "free trade." This reflects the dominant interests of the American capitalist class and its imperialist investments abroad. But it is hardly an expression of any "free trade" principle: the U.S. ruling class also must try to protect its industries and profits at home. As well, its executive committee – its state, headed by President Clinton – must try to divert the working class at home and help turn worker against worker around the globe.

Thus the U.S. also introduces labor and environmental issues that appeal to the labor and environmental movements but really serve as a protectionist ploy to discriminate against third world exports. On its agenda in Seattle were measures to give it extra powers to control the economies of "third world" nations, especially on agricultural issues.

It was a victory for the working classes of the world that the protesters, including participants from dozens of countries, succeeded in giving imperialism a black eye. No pseudo-left demagoguery can hide that fact. They prevented the WTO from meeting on the first scheduled day, November 30,

and thereby embarrassed Clinton, who was trying to flex the U.S.'s muscles. They even stiffened the backbones of "third-world" delegates who normally bow to imperialism without a whimper. And in the end, the WTO was forced to adjourn without settling any of the ongoing disputes among the imperialists, or between them and the superexploited countries. Anti-imperialist fighters across the world saw imperialism slapped in the face in its own heartland.

The setback for their bosses motivated the vicious behavior of the Seattle cops that seriously injured hundreds of protesters. The police violence came as a surprise to most demonstrators, especially after Clinton publicly announced his supposed sympathy for their concerns. Clinton aides, notably Secretary of State Albright and Attorney General Reno, demanded that the rabble be cleared from the streets, and their stormtroopers in Star Wars gear moved into action.

The level of police brutality reflected the direction the ruling class is turning in the current period of growing economic inequality and looming crisis. It was a wake-up call in that it was directed at a largely white crowd, previously unaccustomed to the violence that Blacks and Latinos regularly have to face from cops.

NATIONALISM AND PROTECTIONISM

The Seattle events were the culmination of efforts by many organizations, the most prominent being the "progressive coalition" of union leaders and professional environmentalists, for example Ralph Nader's Public Citizen group. Bureaucrats never known for any spark of radicalism resorted to rhetoric reminiscent of the 1960's. Thus Gerald McEntee, head of AFSCME, urged his labor audience to "name the system" that "commodifies everything from a forest in Brazil to a library in New Jersey" - "corporate capitalism."

Such radical rhetoric belied the union bureaucrats' actual conservative and pro-imperialist program. Their ideology is in reality nationalist and protectionist; they hope to protect American jobs by restricting the shift of production to low-wage countries, and by stopping imports of products made abroad. In Seattle, given their built-in class collaborationism, they wanted above all not to cause trouble for Clinton or the AFL-CIO's candidate to succeed him, Al Gore.

"Democracy" was a popular slogan among all the protesters, inspired by the notoriously secretive back-room dealings of the WTO. But for the "progressive" leaders it was a code word for favoring sections of U.S. capital against that of allegedly more repressive and autocratic states. Many of the denunciations of "global capitalism" coming from them really meant opposition to foreign capitalism, with an implicit demand for the "democratic" imperialists to have an even greater say over other countries' environmental and trade policies. McEntee's sally against "corporate capitalism" only indicated his opposition to sole corporate domination of the WTO - in favor of a "democratic" sharing of power by capitalist governments as well as businesses, with labor bureaucrats getting a subordinate "seat at the table."

A month before the Seattle meeting, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney had written to Clinton assuring him of labor's "broad support" for the U.S.'s negotiating agenda. So when the bureaucrats organized a march of 40,000 workers to downtown Seattle, possibly the largest union rally in this country since Solidarity Day in 1982, they steered it away from the civil disobedience activists who were blocking streets and preventing the WTO sessions from starting.

Clinton's supposed concession to labor, his remark to the

press that the WTO should impose sanctions on countries that refuse to observe fair labor standards, was a hypocritical fraud for several reasons. For one thing, it is the imperialist exploiters who largely gain from the miserable wages and working conditions that he complains of. For another, the U.S. itself refuses to ratify the basic International Labor Organization standards, on the grounds that doing so would violate U.S. sovereignty. Then, after his pro-labor speech his staff, led by Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky, assured her fellow ministers that the Clinton proposal was just talk since it called only for a study of working conditions.

IMPERIALIST ATTACKS ON SOVEREIGNTY

On top of that, for the U.S. to impose sanctions on any country is an imperialist act that not only violates the sovereignty of weaker nations but usually means harsh economic warfare against an entire population. The decade-long sanctions against Iraq have meant death for over a million people, mostly small children. That U.S. labor leaders stand behind such crimes against working people abroad refutes all their pretensions to international labor solidarity and antagonism to corporate capitalism.

The Naderites also attack the WTO for its subordination to "corporate power," centering on the claim that its regulations violate U.S. national sovereignty. In reality, the WTO is dominated largely by American corporations; the fact that the WTO overturns health, labor and environmental laws that inconvenience profits is not a "foreign" problem but the way imperialist capitalism works. The officials of big-time "Non-Governmental Organizations" (bourgeois reform outfits) were consciously lined up behind a national chauvinist strategy of collaboration with big American capital and the Democratic and Republican politicians who serve it.

Both the AFL-CIO and Public Citizen opposed the prospect of China joining the WTO, charging that the Chinese regime rejects fair labor standards - a cover for excluding Chinese products from U.S. markets. Of course, China's statified capitalist rulers encourage superexploitation of Chinese workers - not only for their own benefit but also for imperialist investors, many of them American. That's why Clinton & Co. fought for China's admission. Of course, the internationally oriented wings of the U.S. ruling class are happy to use campaigns for protectionism mounted by the labor/green coalition to wring more concessions from China before ratifying its membership in the WTO and greater access to the U.S. market.

In place of the Sweeney-Greenie nationalist program, American workers and unions should be solidarizing with Chinese workers who for several years have protested in massive numbers against Beijing's expanding privatization of state-owned companies, which wipes out housing and other benefits linked to state jobs.

A NON-RESPECTABLE VICTORY

The masses of protesters who marched peacefully or sat down disruptively in Seattle were furious at the violation of workers' rights and environmental protections. Unlike their U.S.-nationalist leaders, they held a muddle of internationalist and nationalist views, radical ideas mixed with reformist conclusions (like "fixing" the WTO).

Their victory was not won by the polite pressure exerted by the labor and environmentalist bureaucrats but by the direct action activists, including students and radicals of various stripes - along with hundreds of unionists who defied

the union marshals and broke from the official labor parade to join the sit-downers in the streets. Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair made the point:

In the annals of popular protest in America, these have been shining hours, achieved entirely outside the conventional arena of orderly protest and white paper activism and the timid bleats of the professional leadership of big labor and environmentalists. This truly was an insurgency from below in which all those who strove to moderate and deflect the turbulent flood of popular outrage managed to humiliate themselves.

While the cops were attacking the thousands in the streets, the respectable leaders hobnobbed with Clinton & Co., hustling their seats at the WTO table and denouncing the handful of demonstrators who went around smashing Starbucks and Nike windows. Workers' solidarity actions included the shutdown of the docks along the West Coast by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU); Seattle taxi drivers went on strike on November 30.

Mass action was the key to Seattle's success. The window-breaking anarchists on whom much of the bourgeois media coverage focused (and whom some "non-violent" progressives denounced to the cops) were in reality a sideshow. Their efforts substituted justified anger against the system for a serious revolutionary program and gave some cover to the perpetrators of the real violence, the police.

The size of the protest shows that, despite the prosperity for the top layers of society, workers and many others in the United States are seeing the effects of the underlying economic crisis, directly or indirectly. Decent jobs are fewer, job security is fragile, private gain is exalted over public good, and the capitalists are squeezing profits out of every possible crevice – including destroying health and educational gains that have been won over years. The tens of thousands in Seattle were outraged by much of what they see in American society: the obscene gap between rich and poor; racist "law-and-order" campaigns; military interventions abroad; the increase in racial and anti-gay assaults.

THE STRUGGLE MUST BECOME REVOLUTIONARY

The majority of protesters did not see that all these attacks, and the crisis itself, are inherent in the capitalist system. The crimes will not be halted by reforming or even abolishing the WTO. They will certainly not be prevented by electing Democrats to office, as Clinton proves. They demand the overturn of capitalism, the workers' socialist revolution.

Those on the far left who condemned the protesters as U.S. chauvinists or dupes of imperialism were, in sectarian fashion, taking the inevitable mixed consciousness of a mass action as proof of its treason to the working-class cause. Identifying the ranks of a movement with the aims and motivations of its official leaders is a mistake for anyone but a disastrous analysis for supposed Marxists, whose aim should be to break the demonstrators' illusions in pro-capitalist liberal or populist nationalist leaders like Nader, Sweeney and Pat Buchanan.

Those who refused to participate in the union demonstrations displayed gross anti-Bolshevik behavior. As Leon Trotsky pointed out to his followers on the eve of the Spanish Civil War:

A political group that stayed outside of the actual move-

ment and occupied itself with criticisms after the events... would be rejected by the working class. I do not doubt for a moment that the majority of the Bolshevik-Leninists in the regions have participated in all the mass movements, even when they regarded them as not conforming to their own purposes. A revolutionist criticizes not from the outside but from the very heart of the movement itself. ... I do not doubt that on this fundamental question we shall not have the slightest difference among us. (*The Spanish Revolution*, p. 172.)

And in a different article:

We do not solidarize ourselves for a moment with the illusions of the masses; but we must utilize whatever is pro-



ILWU struck West Coast ports and marched in Seattle.

gressive about these illusions to the utmost, otherwise we are not revolutionists but contemptible pedants. (p. 116.)

Trotsky was writing explicitly about a revolutionary situation but did not restrict his comments to that context.

THE REVOLUTIONARY METHOD

Proletarian communists in mass movements neither abstain from the protests because of their ideological confusion and errors nor sugarcoat them as if they already were consciously anti-capitalist. In Seattle, we solidarize with both the labor march, as an expression of the class power of workers, and the civil disobedience activists whose efforts shut the WTO down.

Our aim is to sharpen the protesters anti-corporate views and draw the central lessons of the struggle: that the capitalist class as a whole is the enemy, its politicians included; that the capitalist system must be destroyed; and that the international working class, the chief target of the WTO imperialists, has the social power to accomplish this. We point out that the working class needs to unite its various struggles in a general strike against the capitalists that could win real gains – and above all show the working class the real power it has when it unifies to challenge the system. We also stress the importance of a mass struggle, including mass armed self-defense, against cop brutality.

Against the reformist programs, we point to the only way to actually solve the crisis the WTO is at the center of:

socialist revolution to create a world federation of workers' states. The LRP and *Proletarian Revolution* have regularly raised demands and slogans that reflect what a workers' state would carry out: repudiate the international debts owed to the imperialist banks and financiers; create jobs for all through all-out programs of public works, sliding scales of working hours and escalating scales of wages; end all restrictions on immigrants and refugees to the imperialist countries; end all activities that destroy the environment in the interest of profit.

These and other demands meet the real needs of workers and oppressed people everywhere. We know that now the great majority will try to accomplish such changes by seeking them as reforms by the capitalist states. Their struggle is ours, but we always point out that their aims cannot really be realized under capitalism. However, when the struggle places demands on bodies like the WTO there is a difference. Asking the imperialist WTO to equalize wages in subjugated countries is like asking the fox to protect the chicken coop, or NATO to create peace and plenty for all. The WTO's sole reason for existence is to *deepen* imperialist exploitation.

We raise the need for collaborative international work-

ers' struggles to raise wages, reduce hours and alleviate the imperialist-induced rivalries within our class. We call for the international organization of the working class. However, here too we warn that trade union federations, by themselves, will tend to become tools of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracies of the wealthy imperialist nations. Only through the re-creation of the authentic proletarian Fourth International can the working class overcome imperialist dominance.

Marx showed that workers everywhere have an underlying common interest around which to unite. Capitalism, in contrast, is fundamentally anarchic; the capitalists cannot overcome their divisions. The WTO cannot successfully regulate nor contain the imperialist rivalries; its conflicts in Seattle were a harbinger of a future world war with devastation of a magnitude never before achieved in the history of capitalist bloodletting.

Seattle showed the enormous hatred growing against the horrors of capitalism. That hatred has to be turned into dedication to overthrow the entire capitalist system. The prime task for all anti-capitalist fighters is to join in the building of a revolutionary proletarian party, part of a world party of socialist revolution. Re-create the Fourth International!●

New York Transit

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motion that read:

That TWU Local 100 commence a strike at 12:01 am, Wednesday, December 15, 1999, if NYCT does not accept a contract which meets the following demands: 1. A big wage raise; 2. End of Workfare in transit; 3. No givebacks.

In passing this motion, the meeting bypassed an alternative motion by the main union opposition, New Directions, that did not call a strike but would simply have authorized James to call one. The workers were fed up with the leadership and wanted to take the decision out of its hands.

Unfortunately, the growing strike movement came to a screeching halt. The workers were saddled with the sellout James bureaucracy working hand-in-hand with Giuliani and the bosses. They looked to New Directions, with its large number of Executive Board positions and others posts, to carry out their unanimous strike vote. But New Directions vacillated in the face of the injunctions and ultimately betrayed the decision made by the ranks. It accepted the right of the James leadership to deny the will of the membership body. Consequently, there was no decent contract and no strike on December 15.

Despite the retreat forced on the transit workers, their courageous defiance of the bosses represents a tremendous gain by the working class. It points to a break in the recent history of passive demoralization and to a significant working-class fightback-in-the-making.

Attention now turns to the fight to vote down the sellout contract that the Executive Board agreed to. Defeat of the contract would be a major setback for Giuliani. And it would again open up the question of strike action. A sizable majority of "No" votes would also be a stinging rejection of Willie James and his contemptible leadership, a clear-cut vote of no confidence by the members.

Transit workers and all working-class militants need to take a serious look at the lessons of the December events.

Our aim in this article is to show how the workers moved from indifference toward their union to strong pro-strike sentiment – and then into a near-rebellion against the capitalist state and the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats. We will lay out the events leading up to this confrontation, show how the movement was stopped – and deal with the crucial question, what next?

In doing this we must also describe our own role. For in fact the motion that was unanimously adopted on December 14 was raised by the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) and distributed in thousands of leaflets to workers inside and outside the hall. A small revolutionary workers' organization was able to wield a decisive influence in the class struggle when the workers' movement was at its peak. In contrast, bigger leftist but non-revolutionary forces tailed after events that changed workers' consciousness, thereby contributing to the setback. These lessons too must be drawn.

SUMMER OF DISCONTENT

For some time there were strong indications that transit would become a key battle in the class struggle in New York. As the first of a series of major public employee contracts to expire, the transit contract was seen by many workers as the best chance to overcome recent defeats.

This outlook was fostered by a growing anger and restlessness among workers throughout the U.S. It has been particularly strong in New York City. Two years ago, details emerged about how the corrupt bureaucrats of AFSCME District Council 37, the largest municipal union, criminally fixed the 1995 contract vote in order to cement their partnership with Giuliani. DC 37's contract, featuring two years of zero raises, was used to set the pattern for all public employees. City workers now understood that they all got screwed.

Adding fuel to the fire was the police murder of immigrant worker Amadou Diallo and the eruption of street protests that followed. (See *PR 59*.) In a growing mood of hostility to the powers-that-be, workers began looking to the upcoming contract negotiations as a chance to win back some of the gains lost in recent years. At a mass rally on May 12, 50,000 workers marched in lower Manhattan demanding

decent contracts.

Though not technically city employees (the MTA is a state agency with input from the city), transit workers also had reason to look ahead to a fight over the new contract. Despite their obvious power to shut the city down and their reputation for militancy, in reality transit workers had been taking it on the chin ever since the loss of the 1980 strike by the Local 100 leadership. With workers reluctant to strike in the face of Taylor Law fines, knowing their bureaucratic leadership would sell them out, every militant development among the ranks had hit a brick wall.

However, anger over the 1996 contract had begun to break down the fear of striking. In 1996, the MTA had threatened 2000 layoffs with the excuse of budget deficits. But shortly after James and his "Gang" pushed through a deal that included a zero wage-hike year and the slave-labor Work Experience Program ("WEP" or Workfare, which forces welfare recipients to clean subway cars and stations to receive their below-minimum-wage payments), transit workers learned that they had been duped. Instead of a deficit, the MTA had a budget surplus of some \$200 million, which has grown since to around \$1 billion.

This time, workers were looking for big wage gains to make up for the last contract and were increasingly opposed to Workfare. James, having won the last union election by a thin margin that gave him only a narrow majority on the Executive Board, knew he had to produce. But he didn't realize the depth of workers' anger until his members strongly voted down his proposed \$60-a-head dues assessment to finance public relations for the upcoming contract negotiations.

THE TURNING POINT

Following this fiasco, James switched tactics. Over the summer, he adopted a militant-sounding stance, demanding a large raise of 10 percent a year over three years and dropping hints of a possible strike. On August 19, at a special Executive Board meeting, James violated the union constitution by unilaterally deciding to hire Ray Rogers' Corporate Campaign to run the publicity drive. This move aimed to bolster James's image and mute criticism from New Directions.

With developments pointing to the potential for a militant struggle, the union scheduled division meetings in September to discuss the contract. Local 100 is separated into numerous divisions, a device to keep the ranks fragmented. Usually contract meetings lead to an unwieldy laundry list of demands, which allows the bureaucracy to then do what it wants. Indeed, attendance at the meetings was extremely low. Was this a sign that transit workers, despite their increased strike talk, continued to be demoralized and expected little from the contract struggle?

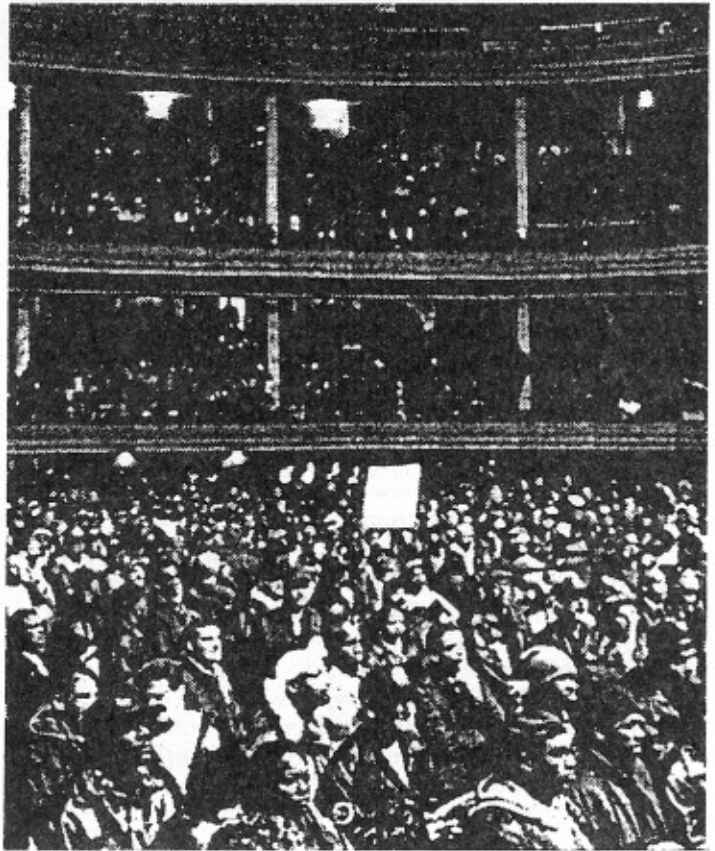
While the meetings failed to show a rise in militancy, with three months to go many workers were taking a wait-and-see attitude. The union at this point had done little to mobilize anyone, except for organizing distributions of a 4-page leaflet designed by Rogers that attacked corporate "fat cats" who get public subsidies and tax breaks. The brochure barely mentioned the upcoming contract; rather, it urged the public to write letters to the mayor and governor to ask them to fund transit instead of big business.

Despite the lackluster efforts by the bureaucracy, the turning point came on November 17. The union held its first contract rally, which the leaders expected to be a pro forma affair. But some 3000 workers engaged in a spirited demonstration that revealed growing sentiment for a strike.

Chanting slogans like, "No Contract, No Work!" and "Shut it Down!", workers talked and argued in the streets long after the bureaucrats called on them to go home. There was a growing sense that a solid strike could win gains and even force amnesty from Taylor Law penalties. James was clearly caught off guard by this outburst of militant sentiment.

NEW DIRECTIONS LAGS BEHIND

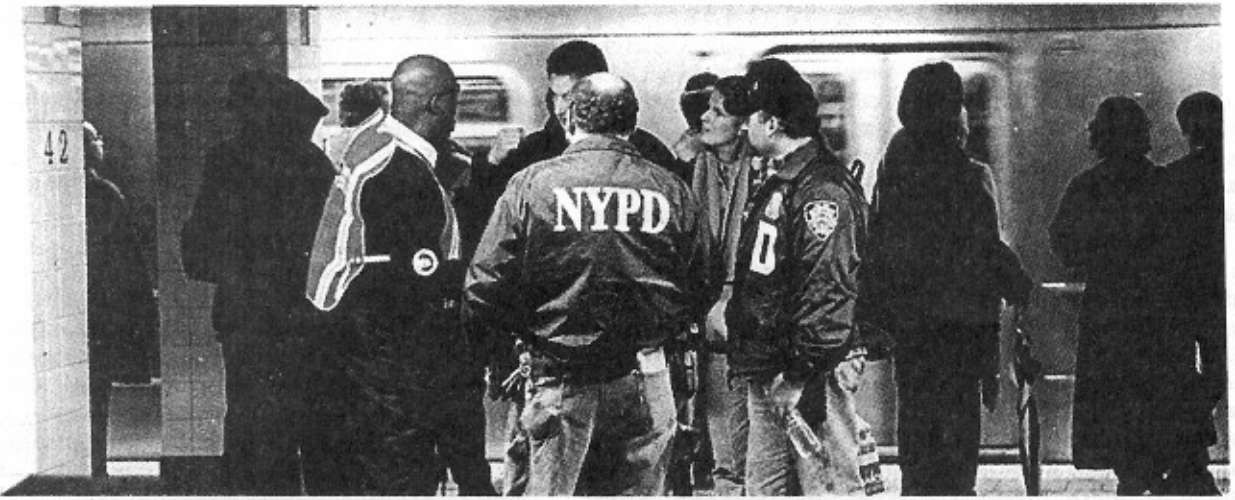
But what about James's opposition, New Directions? To understand its role in what has happened, we have to go back to the crucial time leading up to the explosion of strike sentiment. Over the summer, in preparation for the September meetings, the LRP had tried to initiate a petition drive



TWU mass meeting unanimously ordered a strike; James and New Directions violated membership decision.

to call a mass meeting of the entire local. Although other militants also circulated the petition, we were unable to build a broad committee around the effort, since many of the best fighters looked to New Directions for leadership. And New Directions declined to take up the petition drive; it only raised motions on the stacked Executive Board for a general membership meeting. Lacking the forces to build the campaign on our own, we had to drop this approach.

We then focused on countering the likely contract sellout by the bureaucrats. We said the union had to prepare to strike, and urged militants to concentrate on getting the separate divisions to adopt a few key contract demands – in order to allow the members to hold the bureaucrats accountable. While open to supporting other demands, we argued for the meetings to endorse specific proposals like the 10 percent annual wage increase and ending Workfare in transit. The first was aimed at stopping James from backing away from



Police thugs deployed to coerce subway workers during strike build-up.

his own demand for a large wage gain. Our second slogan – “Same Job, Same Pay and Protection! End Workfare!” – posed the need to fight Giuliani and James’s WEP program as an attack on welfare workers that undermined union jobs.

This effort also met with little success, given the low attendance at the union meetings. At this point we had to reassess the situation. The change in mood had not yet registered as active motion in the ranks. Our tasks were still largely ones of propaganda and education around the need for our fellow workers to mobilize for strike action, the only real way to win the gains needed. This was especially important, given the efforts of New Directions to avoid discussing a strike.

In fact, when the workers’ militancy first exploded on November 17, New Directions was dramatically caught off guard. It had conspicuously done nothing to promote strike sentiment, even when the workers were openly beginning to contemplate such action. Some of its leaders revealed its strategy by openly opposing a strike on the grounds that it would be led by James. In reality, New Directions was asking workers to wait until new union elections would take place – let James be saddled with an inevitably bad contract and New Directions would waltz into power. Rather than leading rank and file workers to act on their own militancy and recognize their own class power, New Directions was telling them to suck it up for the time being and wait for their saviors, once elected, to do better for them. It was no accident that at the November rally New Directions failed to arm its supporters with either placards or even a clear slogan that addressed actions the growing strike mood made possible. New Directions gave no direction to counter James’s strategy.

In contrast, the LRP was able to play a role in filling in the vacuum of leadership. Armed with a leaflet, “Let’s Prepare to Strike!”, we attacked the failure of James and New Directions to plan for a successful strike. In order to expose the gap between James’s rhetoric and his failure to fight the bosses, we raised the slogans “Willie Said 10% – Let’s Win 10%! No Slave-labor WEP! No Givebacks!” In addition to mass leafleting, we handed out over 100 placards with these slogans. (Copies of all LRP leaflets issued during the struggle are available on request.)

Even we were surprised at the magnitude of the response. Workers eagerly took placards and leaflets. Unlike in past years, workers did not greet talk of a strike with skepticism. On the contrary, because the LRP alone was addressing the question of the need for a strike, workers

were anxious to read our literature once they saw the headline, “Let’s Prepare to Strike,” or heard us call it out.

STRIKE MOMENTUM GROWS

With even James talking strike and growing militancy among workers, New Directions had to take up the issue. The November issue of its bulletin *Hell on Wheels* stated:

If there is no acceptable settlement by December 15, the only real options will be either to keep talking or to strike. That’s the choice transit workers will have to make. New Directions is doing what we can to make sure that transit workers can make that decision from a position of strength not weakness.

New Directions is determined to win a good contract – without a strike if possible, with a strike if necessary.

In the present U.S. presidential campaign, George W. Bush habitually avoids committing himself to a firm stand on controversial vote-losing questions by using the old dodge, “That’s up to the people.” When leaders avoid leading by passing the buck, we know to watch our wallets. The tactic was no less a scam with New Directions. Of course it’s the membership’s right to decide, but under this pretext the New Directions pols said only that there should be a discussion of a strike – without committing themselves as to whether it would be a good idea.

Criticizing New Directions’ failure to take a clear stand, we wrote in our bulletin for November 17:

The League for the Revolutionary Party has consistently fought for a strategy of mass action. Unlike New Directions, we have not shied away from telling the truth: that a decent contract will only be won by a strike that mobilizes the entire membership. New Directions’s failure to put forward a fighting contract strategy allows the Hall/James leadership to retain the initiative, and thus the ability to stick us with another sellout contract. That would be criminal when there are now so many opportunities for mass workers’ struggle in New York.

Faced with the snowballing strike sentiment of an angry work force, New Directions began to hint that a strike might be necessary. They now pushed on the Executive Board for a mass membership meeting to deal with the contract struggle. Even James was now forced to accept this demand made by the ranks. But the ranks had already moved way ahead of their so-called leaders.

On December 8 the union held another rally, this time with 12,000 workers – one of the most militant workers’

demonstrations in years. Any doubts about the sentiment of the ranks was erased by the loud chants of "Strike, Strike, Strike!" that echoed through midtown. Workers were especially irate to learn that management was offering a bare 9 percent increase over four years.

With New Directions sticking to its "Let the Members Decide" line and failing to come out for a strike, the LRP again took the lead in fighting for strike action. Our bulletin - "No Contract, No Work! No Sellout! Prepare to Strike!" - and our placards with these slogans were again grabbed up. Our warnings against a sellout hit home with the workers, who were angered to learn that James, far from following through on his strike threats, had told the press he'd guarantee to keep the trains and buses running. While he was later forced by an Executive Board vote to retract, the damage had been done and workers were seething.

James's weakened grip was shown by the fact that he had to accept the demand for mass membership meetings on December 14. He also had to endorse a march across the Brooklyn Bridge on December 15 that New Directions had called. But New Directions' call for the march still didn't mention a strike.

DECEMBER 14: DAY OF DECISION

Following the militant action on December 8, the city was abuzz with talk about an imminent transit strike. Mayor Giuliani foamed at the mouth, while the press and television were filled with emergency plans drawn up by the frightened city fathers. The MTA warned of fare hikes if wages were raised, trying as always to divide the working class. The bourgeois media scoured the transit system, looking to interview any worker who opposed a strike; to their surprise, they found overwhelming pro-strike sentiment.

December 14 was the big day. For the first time since 1972, the TWU had to hold a general membership meeting (actually two meetings, to allow all shifts to attend). The excitement was electric as workers lined up at the entrance of Manhattan Center for the morning meeting.

No one really knew what to expect. Word had come out days before that James and his cronies were not going to show up and had ordered the Executive Board to stand by at union headquarters for a settlement. If James failed to appear, New Directions board members would run the meeting.

Despite the uncertainty about what would take place, the LRP came to the meetings prepared with a motion calling for a strike. In our leaflet we warned of the danger of a James sellout, and that the leadership would attempt to thwart the members' will to strike for a decent contract. We also criticized New Directions for its wavering. We explained that our strike motion was counterposed to the New Directions motion to authorize the Executive Board to call a strike if necessary; this motion would take the decision out of the control of the membership and put it in the hands of a James-led Executive Board, which would accept a lousy contract and would never agree to a strike. We also argued that it would be a mistake to allow the contract expiration date to slip by, given the golden opportunity presented by the Christmas and New Year's season to put pressure on the capitalists to make significant concessions at long last.

When over 1500 TWU members poured into the hall, the chair was Division Vice President Gil Rodriguez, who effectively stymied the will of the ranks to take a strike vote.

Rodriguez dropped a bombshell by starting to read the gag order issued by Judge Pesce. If he expected the members

to cave in, however, he was mistaken. He got through the first sentence of the injunction before most of the audience started booing and cursing him loudly. "I don't like to have to do this, but I have to," he whined. "There are injunctions against us, and I have to read them. It would be irresponsible of me not to. It's the law, and we have to obey it." The uproar was almost constant, forcing Rodriguez to pause frequently, especially at the clause which seemed to forbid even mentioning strike, even on the phone, even to a non-member of the union. Then he opened the floor for discussion.

Again he had misjudged the mood. Every speaker denounced him and James. Whenever he tried to defend himself, that brought new shouts of outrage.

One of the first speakers said, "I thought we were supposed to hear reports on the contract negotiations so far, and you bring us this injunction! Why don't you do your job and let us know what numbers the MTA is talking about?" Rodriguez said, "All right, I'll tell you. So far, the MTA is offering a 4-year contract with 2 percent each . . ." - and the screaming started again.

After a while Rodriguez said, "Look, you can call me whatever you like, but that's what they're offering." Someone shouted, "I say we vote to reject!" Rodriguez replied, "The injunction means we can't vote on anything at this meeting" - and the screaming started again and went on for a while.

MESSAGE FOR JAMES

A woman from the floor started to read the New Directions motion, which began with a clause of the TWU Constitution on the proper procedure for authorizing strikes. She got as far as the word "strike" when Rodriguez stopped her: "Sister, you know that by the injunction you can't say that." The shouting began again, drowning Rodriguez out. People were incredulous: "You mean we can't read our own Union Constitution?!" At this point, hundreds of workers walked out in disgust.

In the chaos that followed, Rodriguez was calling on speakers out of order, forgetting to point to the several microphones in proper order. Workers jeered, "He's supposed to negotiate our wage figures, and he can't count six microphones?"

With the focus of the meeting now on the injunction, an LRP supporter got to speak and denounced the capitulation of the union leaders. He said that Rodriguez's attitude showed that the James leadership actually welcomed the injunction. He pointed out that the civil rights movement in the South had broken Jim Crow segregation by massively and repeatedly breaking racist laws, and argued that workers should learn from this example.

At one point Mike Fitzpatrick, a long-time bureaucrat, was at the podium trying to make some point. A worker whom he had been talking to went up to the podium and asked, "Can you take a message from me to Willie James?" Fitzpatrick said, "Sure," and the guy slugged him in the jaw.

Near the end of the morning meeting, Roger Toussaint, chair of the Track Division and a New Directions leader, took the podium and said that we should have some results from the proceedings; we should at least resolve to keep all our options open to act for a good contract, and we should instruct our negotiators not to negotiate as long as the injunction is in effect. This was then made into a motion which passed unanimously by voice vote.

The evening meeting was more than twice as big. Outside Manhattan Center, dozens of press and TV reporters

were interviewing any worker they could grab, and almost every left group in the city was passing out literature. Hundreds of cops harassed workers, leafleters and passers-by alike. LRPers distributing our leaflet and strike motion got enthusiastic responses even from non-transit workers just getting off work who were outraged at the injunctions and who wanted to see someone stand up to Giuliani.

"STRIKE, STRIKE, STRIKE!"

Inside, the mood of the ranks now was fighting determination; most had heard about the injunction. There were no James Gang officers at the start; John Simino, a New Directions Board member, chaired. This time there was open and relatively orderly, if very passionate, discussion.

One of the first speakers was a New Directions leader and E. Board member with a summary of the injunction in hand. People in the audience yelled out, "Tear it up!"; he did so, to wild applause. He also mentioned the December 15 march and said that many other unions and community groups supported transit workers' opposition to the injunction and would "come out with us."

This time, the LRP supporter got to speak early. He presented the motion for a strike vote to rousing applause, warning against leaving the decision in the hands of the pro-James majority on the Board. He added, in line with what had been said about other unions, that we should think seriously about a general strike, a truly effective defense against attacks and a way to gain what all workers need.

The next two speakers spoke in favor of the motion. One said, "I think that it's what we all need. We can't wait, tonight's the time. Am I right when I say that this is what we all want?" At this invitation, everyone shouted as one, "Yes!" The speaker then said, "That means it's passed." Everybody cheered, pumped their fists and chanted "Strike! Strike! Strike!"

The rest of the meeting was less focused. Discussion continued, with all speakers agreed that now was the time to strike. But the New Directions chairs allowed the discussion to wander aimlessly, avoiding any attempt to organize for a strike despite the clear decision that had been made.

STRIKE MOTION PASSES AGAIN

Four of James's vice-presidents and other officials arrived with a police escort to give reports on the Divisional negotiations. Corinne Scott-Mack, a former New Directions member, took the podium and started to speak, to a chorus of boos. "You can boo if you like, but I know I'm a fighter, and I'm here to tell you the truth," she lied. "Your leadership stood firm and faced the TA off!" She tried to go on, but the booing was unrelenting and forced her to stop.

Gary Hansjergen, the union Director of Stations, tried to give a similar speech, but the Stations workers yelled, "you split-shift motherfucker!" and threw wads of paper at him, so he stopped. (Many categories of transit workers face worsening working conditions; Hansjergen had tried to get the token clerks in Stations to swallow split shifts.) Carefully avoiding mentioning the overall negotiations, each bureaucrat claimed that they had given nothing back in their respective divisions. Each officer talked very briefly indeed and then walked briskly backstage and out. The members, however, weren't having this, and shouted and cursed more loudly with each report. The barrage of garbage kept up.

At one point there was a commotion with shouts that "There are cops on the stage!" Workers chanted "Cops out!

Cops out!" Finally, the security guys said, "The cops are gone. There were about 20 of them here to escort Corinne Scott-Mack in."

By this time the proceedings were in chaos. New Directions officers took the podium and one after another said, "We soon have to go to an Executive Board meeting at the union hall to get a report on the negotiations. If any of you want to come, you can. Or you can wait here."

Another New Directions leader formally read out their motion to authorize the Board to call a strike within 24 hours. Although this motion sounded OK to many at first, it became obvious that it was bad on two counts. Delaying the strike for 24 hours would be sabotage, at odds with the clear understanding that "No Contract, No Work" was the right strategy. Second, authorizing the Board to call a strike meant there would be no strike at all. Reaction was confused. The chair said, "We'll now vote on the proposals." Once again, the strike motion introduced by the LRP passed, this time by unanimous voice vote. Given this, New Directions couldn't even press for a vote on its own motion.

Shortly after, the crowd started heading out, half to go home and the rest to go to the union hall but with no clear aim or leadership. New Directions on the podium ignored the clear will of the body to implement the adopted motion immediately; then it left leadership to the Board - that is, to James. Because of its timidity and bureaucratic instincts, New Directions betrayed the mandate of the meeting. While it was pushed toward expressions of greater militancy than ever before, New Directions never really changed its strategy of avoiding mass action and then sticking James with the blame for an unpopular contract - hoping to sail into office after the difficult days of the contract fight are over.

WHOSE UNION HALL?

As the crowd angrily stormed out, scores of workers marched to the subway to go to the union hall. Chants of "strike" and "shut it down" echoed throughout the station - to the amazement of subway riders, many of whom expressed solidarity with the transit workers.

A crowd of transit workers surrounded the union hall, which was "protected" by cops. A number of workers wanting to know if James was inside entered the lobby only to find the elevators weren't running. Most stood outside, agitated but determined to find out what was going on with the negotiations. Things grew tense as the police began putting up barricades. Angry shouts of "this is our union hall" upset the quiet of the neighborhood. Soon the cops were preventing outraged members from entering their own union hall.

After more than an hour in a cold drizzle, Toussaint came out to speak to workers gathered outside. He indicated that there was a report of a settlement of 3 percent per year for three years. Workers began to shout him down in anger as he tried to explain that he was only reporting what he heard, that the Executive Board was in the dark waiting to hear from James and that he was against any such deal. But again New Directions offered no leadership.

Slowly, the crowd broke up. As it turned out, the agreement was not reached until early in the morning: the Executive Board voted to approve a contract, 24-20, with one abstention. One New Directions member voted for the deal. New Directions did not introduce any motion for a strike, nor did it assert that the membership meeting had preempted the Board by itself voting to strike.

The city awoke on the morning of December 15 to the

news that a contract deal had been reached. Transit workers were to receive a 12 percent increase over three years, plus a possible 3.3 percent reduction in pension contributions for many workers if the New York State legislature and governor approve. Republican Governor George Pataki, however, has successfully vetoed every such bill in the past three years, for everyone from transit workers to teachers (except for prison guards who, like other cops, are not workers but hired guns of the ruling class). This has not stopped Willie James from "guaranteeing" passage of the legislation.

THE GIVEBACK CONTRACT

While the raise is significantly higher than recent city and state contracts, it was far below the union's demands. Given the scrawny increases last time, the 12 percent over 3 years really amounts to 15 percent over 6 years, no bargain at all. Worse, the contract continues Workfare with its super-exploitation, and includes concessions and murky clauses that could devastate seniority rules and working conditions.

For example, the proposal provides for extensive "broad-banding" (merging of tasks and job categories, so that each worker does more jobs) and speed-up among subway car maintainers and bus mechanics. But news of this provision sparked an incipient rebellion in the Bus Divisions, the traditional base of the old leadership, so Sonny Hall had to intervene to re-negotiate the already-concluded deal. A stacked meeting of the Executive Board approved a modification which only *postpones* broad-banding in the Bus Divisions.

James's contract also provides for merging two bus divisions, after discussion by a joint TWU-MTA panel. Workers are expected to vote for the merger without knowing the details, but management's plans are clear. It wants to saddle all bus workers with the conditions of the worst off: weaker seniority rights, less vacation pay and fewer sick days.

UNIONS CAPITULATE

The contract was greeted as a victory by the New York labor bureaucracy, hoping they could use the wage gains as a pattern for their own unions. They were especially grateful that there had been no strike, which in defying James would have challenged all of them, too. They made no serious protest against Giuliani's police-state injunction that forced Local 100 to bargain at gunpoint. At the time, Central Labor Council head Brian McLaughlin and United Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten issued what the civil service paper *The Chief* called a "tepid" protest. Only after the deal was done did Weingarten denounce the injunction as unconstitutional. Union leaders were notably absent from the December 15 demonstration, which they had endorsed.

No doubt the other union leaders were taking their cue from Willie James, who welcomed the court order that served to protect the leadership from the militancy and anger of the membership. When given the opportunity to appear before Judge Pesce, TWU lawyers criminally declined even to request the lifting of the injunction. At any rate, Giuliani withdrew it on January 22, one day before it was to expire.

Much has been made of the fact that Giuliani's injunction, especially the ban on workers' even discussing a strike, violated existing bourgeois law and would likely have been overturned on appeal. Such details don't trouble Giuliani, who has lost dozens of decisions in the courts but continues to challenge the law in order to give the ruling class strong leadership. His racist regime has repeatedly trampled on civil rights in attacking the working class and especially people of

color. Only days before the injunction, he had threatened to arrest homeless people found in the streets and take away their children.

Even though the government already has the anti-union Taylor Law which fines workers two days pay for each day on strike, the mayor's injunction essentially created a new law on the spot designed to smash a working-class struggle. Giuliani's vicious attack on transit workers was supported by so-called "friends of labor" in the Democratic Party. New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer filed the MTA's injunction; Hillary Clinton, running for U.S. Senator from New York with lots of union support, backed the injunctions. The court moves were also endorsed by the bourgeois media, supposed champions of free speech. A rare exception was *Daily News* columnist Juan Gonzalez, who drew this conclusion at the end of a pro-worker article:

In court, Giuliani had put a gun to the head of an entire labor union, and the union's own leaders had not raised a single word of objection. Willie James was using the mayor's injunction to keep his own members in line. When they go to vote on a contract, the transit workers will remember that. (Dec. 17.)

Even after the agreement was announced, Giuliani continued his offensive. "There are people who want to cause anarchy," he declared at a City Hall news conference. "Marxism unfortunately is still alive in parts of New York City." A force of 3000 cops was assigned to subways and buses to intimidate militant workers who might think about a job action. Workers now had to work fast enough to please not only the MTA bosses but the cops as well.

NEW DIRECTIONS' WRONG DIRECTION

Unfortunately, Marxists were all too few. That afternoon, the planned march across the Brooklyn Bridge fizzled out; perhaps 600 people marched. After the loud, militant meeting on the previous evening and the impasse that followed, this reflected the paralysis of New Directions and its periphery. The New Directions leaders had no signs or leaflets of their own. A few supporters decided that the best way to counter Giuliani's red-baiting was to carry American flags and signs like "God Bless America."

When pressured by a mass meeting of thousands of workers, New Directions had talked militantly of defying Giuliani. But the next day they were capitulating to the court order. Obeying the injunction, New Directions even put a message on their hotline telling workers not to engage in any job actions, doing exactly what they had denounced the James Gang for the day before. The hotline on December 15 did not even mention their own rally called for that evening.

At the rally, an LRP speaker defended New Directions against the City Hall attacks. Giuliani's specific attempt to target New Directions is aimed at propping up the sellout James leadership, he pointed out, in order to prevent militant struggles. It demonstrates that government intervention in the trade unions is a reactionary attempt to contain working class militancy. The capitalist state - the cops, the courts, and the whole political establishment - is the enemy of the working class. Whenever the state is under attack, democracy is thrown aside and the bourgeois class dictatorship becomes more visible. The brief speech ended with a thinly veiled statement (due to the injunction) of the need for a general strike, given the expiration of so many city workers' contracts. Although the speech received applause, there was no way to energize the dispirited and directionless rally.

We defend New Directions as fellow workers from the government's attacks. Ironically, Giuliani's attacks have for the moment bolstered the group's reputation as a militant opposition in transit. But its diversion of the militant strike sentiment, even at the decisive mass meeting it ran, shows that any such reputation is undeserved. In fact, it has played a rotten role in inviting state intervention into the unions. Following the tactics of its friends in Teamsters For a Democratic Union (TDU), New Directions has repeatedly called on the courts to intervene in union affairs. (Only a few weeks before the injunctions, New Directions went to court to force James to put them on the contract negotiating committee.) The reality is that while the state intervenes under the guise of defending democracy or "cleaning up" the unions, its real purpose is to extend capitalist control over labor. Like Ron Carey and the TDU, New Directions got snared in its own trap. (See PR 56: "Government Out of the Teamsters!")

New Directions' wavering was not simply a mistake but the culmination of a long-term process. As New Directions has achieved electoral successes and moved closer to power, the conservative character of its "rank-and-filist" approach has emerged ever more sharply. They counterpose no fighting program to James and the leadership. Even their emphasis on union democracy is betrayed by their willingness to bring in the government to settle their disputes. It was no accident that New Directions ignored the strike decision by the rank and file and defended the right of the bureaucracy to decide. More and more, their message to transit workers has been that simply voting New Directions into power will fix things.

NEW DIRECTIONS SAYS DON'T FIGHT, ELECT US!

New Directions of course opposes the proposed contract. Their January *Hell on Wheels* bulletin has long and detailed critiques of the proposed contract and other James Gang shenanigans, but with barely a word about their own role in the struggle. While the court injunctions may make some caution necessary, New Directions' abbreviated account of the mass meetings and their own role still speaks volumes.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF STALINISM

**A Resurrection of Marxist Theory
by Walter Daum**

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

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

Al Richardson, Revolutionary History

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This is typical of their approach. For over 14 years, New Directions has remained the loyal opposition in Local 100, criticizing loudly and promising that if they only had a majority on the Executive Board, they would do wonderful things. Now they have a few ideas for following up a contract rejection. "Send the negotiators back to the bargaining table to get rid of the givebacks" – but that means Willie James again. "Join the Municipal Labor Coalition" – the boss-loving bureaucrats who did nothing when Giuliani pulled his injunction. And "wait patiently for some other union to set a better 'pattern'" – that's what the hapless bureaucrats of the Civil Service Employees Association have been doing since last spring. This amounts to New Directions' open advertisement that they are not Giuliani's fire-breathing radicals but are rather would-be bureaucrats talking a bit tougher than those they hope to replace.

Hell on Wheels also suggests letting the contract hang until Local 100's elections next December – this may be "the biggest threat we have to force the TA to make . . . concessions." Really? The TA will not be afraid of people willing to wait 11 months with an expired contract without building for mass mobilization and a strike! Everyone knows it was the real threat of a strike that won even the meager gains in James's contract.

While it would be better not to have the boss-loving James in the driver's seat, he has to be fought in action – to wait means to accept attacks that further erode the workers' class interests. Especially if one keeps in mind the needs of the whole working class, then New Directions' narrow electoral perspective is petty at best. Demobilizing the ranks of the working class in order to give the tops the space to operate – of course, all in the interest of the members – is an old fairy tale often spun by labor bureaucrats. Reality proves time and again that whatever gains workers make come in proportion to the threat they present.

REVOLUTIONARY LESSONS

Class struggle is a great teacher. The experiences of the transit battle provide important lessons, not only for the immediate fight for a decent contract but for the development of the revolutionary working-class movement.

1. Working-class consciousness is transformed through the mass activity of the workers themselves.

Marxists know that practice gives birth to consciousness, not the reverse. Momentum for a strike skyrocketed when transit workers had the opportunity to come together in rallies and meetings and feel their collective power.

The relation between mass action and militancy in the transit struggle reinforces the revolutionary understanding that class consciousness must be assessed dynamically, not statically. In projecting for the future, we must look at the objective conditions that will transform today's consciousness. Capitalism is a system unable to solve its fundamental problems and is facing a serious crisis that will produce mass working class explosions. The smug pundits who comfort themselves with the notion that workers have been bought off and are no revolutionary factor will be in for a surprise.

The working class is objectively a revolutionary class. Its liberation can only take place by overthrowing all class rule and creating a classless society, communism. When the level of struggle lags behind objective reality, workers' consciousness of their revolutionary role has remained confined to a few. As mass struggles inevitably break out against capitalist exploitation and oppression, growing numbers will develop

Vote "No" and Demand James Resign!

As we write, transit workers are divided over the contract, and the mail ballot now going on seems too close to call. It is not that workers really like the contract. Since the momentum toward a strike has effectively been detoured and blocked, many demoralized workers see no alternative, no way to answer their needs. Nearly all transit workers, including much of James's former base among bus workers, have come to despise this Judas leadership, but what alternative is there to his lousy contract? They feel that they might as well vote for it and take its modest pay raise while praying that the givebacks and Workfare won't take as bad a toll as they fear.

One thing missing from their calculations is an awareness that a stinging defeat for the contract would amount to a smashing blow not only to Giuliani and the MTA bosses, but above all, to the James leadership. One reason for this omission is that the opposition to the contract has largely been lackluster in the hands of New Directions, which steadfastly refuses to draw attention to the fact beating back the contract is the way to send a message to the hated James Gang.

Why? Because a massive no vote, especially if accompanied by a clear anti-James campaign theme, would expose the fact that James could no longer claim to represent the members. It would constitute a mass membership demand for the resignation of James and his whole gang of class collaborating sellout artists. That would put New Directions at the helm of the union in the struggle for a better contract now – and that would be a disaster for New Directions!

Instead, whether the contract is voted up or down, New Directions wants the struggle over the contract to be James's responsibility. If the contract is voted down, without a new strike which New Directions certainly doesn't want to lead, what better deal can be gotten from the city? Let James be stuck with the consequences – including the future election of New Directions. No wonder these out-bureaucrats confine their anti-contract propaganda narrowly to its provisions.

More workers now agree with us about what is to be done in transit than ever before; some even have come close to our overall revolutionary views. However, Marxist transit workers are under no illusion that New Directions has yet been exposed as a fraud in the minds of all their fellow militants. In fact, as hatred for James has risen, support for New Directions has likewise climbed. Many workers have doubts as a result of what has occurred but still feel that New Directions represents a real way out of present conditions.

We all learn from our experiences, at different rates and at different times. Words are important, but actual experience determines. We therefore say to our fellow workers, "Let us fight together against the contract. Let us

demand that New Directions lead a campaign for a 'No' vote and for James's resignation once his and Giuliani's contract is defeated. You believe that New Directions wants to give militant leadership to this union and has a strategy to win real gains; we do not. The struggle and this challenge together will prove which of us is right!"

If the present contract is voted down, militants will have to demand that New Directions force the James Gang to resign, take leadership and mobilize the union for a struggle to obtain a better contract. A large "No" vote and the ousting of James & Co. from office would be major steps in re-energizing the militancy of December prior to the sellout.

At that point we will urge militants inside and outside of New Directions to form a *Committee for a Fighting Contract Campaign* to put pressure on New Directions. In December, New Directions was pressed to call for and get mass membership meetings and rallies which powerfully energized the ranks. The fight for a new contract demands the same mass involvement of the membership.

Within such a movement and within such a fighting committee, we will again argue for a strike as the only way forward. And we would try to convince other workers that such a committee could prove indispensable in organizing the struggle should a strike take place.

HOW THE STRIKE MOVEMENT CAN BE REBUILT

We campaigned for a strike when it was not popular because we believed it was objectively necessary. We tell the truth as we see it, not just what people want to hear. If the contract is voted down, we believe that there is only one way that a better contract can be secured – through a strike. That's the truth.

Transit workers can do it again. They can rebuild their strike movement, and this time be ready to counter Giuliani and the MTA. In December, the bosses were particularly vulnerable because a strike threatened holiday profits. Now they are again becoming vulnerable because the contracts of tens of thousands of angry city workers will shortly expire. The contract for the 200,000 members of DC 37 is up in March. City workers have looked to transit workers to lead the way. A transit strike would not only set a wage pattern, it would threaten the bosses with a *general strike!* And then nothing in the city would move.

If a fighting campaign occurs, we are confident that increasing numbers of fellow militants in the TWU will see through New Directions and will see the need to build an alternative leadership that will genuinely fight in the interests of our class. We will try to convince them that the struggle proves that the only leadership that can advance the mass struggle to victory is that of revolutionary workers. This struggle has already proven to be rich in lessons crucial to all advanced workers.

revolutionary consciousness and create a mass revolutionary party. The activity of the revolutionary party and the mass struggles will in turn transform potential revolutionary consciousness into a reality and set the stage for a revolutionary transformation of society.

2. Under heightened conditions of class struggle, even a small revolutionary group can play an important role.

For many years the LRP has fought to overcome the demoralization that led many militants to reject the strike weapon in transit. We have put a great deal of efforts in revolutionary propaganda and educational activity on the need for a transit strike. Our positions have been far from popular, and we have been attacked as far-out by vacillating leftists and reformists in New Directions and other groups.

Revolutionaries understand that the masses of workers, once engaged in struggle, are far more radical and militant than they appear in quiet times. For the reformists and fake lefts, the majority of workers are too "backward" to hear the revolutionary program until some indefinite future.

The New York transit struggle shows that we had it right. The tens of thousands of ordinary transit workers who marched, rallied and assembled to demand a strike were miles ahead of the New Directions and much of the "left." If rank-and-file militants, bruised by running into the new barriers hastily erected against their struggle, revert to their previous bitter resignation, it's not their "backwardness" that is to blame but that of their misleaders.

The best militants, however, are drawing and discussing the lessons of the struggle: that the government serves only the bosses or, as more transit workers are now saying, the capitalists; the Democrats and Republicans are the parties of the capitalists; mass strikes, not lobbying, are the way to smash anti-labor laws and win gains; and that when the whole working class faces attacks together, we should fight back together. The general strike is a tactic now getting serious consideration.

Aside from those who have been influenced by our work over the years, many transit and other workers drew these lessons themselves. The LRP intervened in the struggle as open revolutionaries, speaking and leafleting for a transit strike, propagandizing for a general strike and saying clearly that these movements would ultimately have to lead to workers' socialist revolution. Far from recoiling, tens of thousands of transit workers grabbed, read and discussed our literature and voted for the strike motion we put forward. Workers who previously would never have used such terms were speaking of the "working class," the "ruling class" and "capitalists."

3. Marxism represents the objective interests of the working class.

We played a role but do not claim credit for the growth of class consciousness that led to the strike movement. Big shifts in consciousness are the result of objective circumstances and the class struggle. What we do take credit for is our ability to point to the direction of objective circumstances, based on our revolutionary Marxist outlook, which enables us to help prepare other advanced workers and fighting militants to lead as the class struggle develops.

Contrast this to New Directions, which includes various "socialist" tendencies. Not only did it lag behind the growing strike movement; it acted as a drag on the development of class consciousness. Its emphasis on the courts and union elections has had a conservatizing influence on the struggle,

feeding into workers' false sense of powerlessness. The message is that workers cannot really defeat the sellouts and sabotage through mass action and the creation of a new workers' leadership through the class struggle.

4. The crisis of leadership is the decisive question facing the working class.

In 1938 Leon Trotsky wrote that "the world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat." The same crisis was verified by the transit struggle. Objective circumstances were ripe for a strike struggle that would have had a dramatic impact on class relations in New York and the country as a whole. A New York transit strike would not only have shut the city down; it would have electrified workers throughout the country, to an even greater extent than did the United Parcel Service strike in 1997. What was lacking was a leadership capable of taking the struggle forward and generalizing it.

All too often, reformists blame the failure of struggles on the workers. Yet here, workers were pushing for a strike and standing up to the bourgeois state. What held them back was not their willingness to fight but the fact that the biggest opposition force with its "left" leadership proved that it represents backward class consciousness. The New Directions socialists may believe that they can play the traditional labor game now and shift to a revolutionary stance at the next stage. In reality, you reap what you sow.

The LRP sees its central task as building the revolutionary party of the working class. This mainly involves propaganda and educational work to develop the best fighters into revolutionary cadre, the future leadership of the revolutionary workers' movement. Despite our small size, we try to seize every opportunity the class struggle provides, knowing that mass struggles are the best schools for revolutionaries.

The LRP will continue working to consolidate the best militants in transit and the working class as a whole, not leaving to chance drawing the many lessons of this struggle. We know that the workers will rise again, despite this setback. We intend, as always, to offer effective leadership in the day-to-day struggles; and to show how winning gains and keeping them requires workers socialist revolution and a workers revolutionary party to lead it. ●

\$\$ Donations Needed \$\$

This issue reflects a great deal of activity by the LRP in the recent period. We hope our readers and friends can appreciate that the costs of the literature distributed to transit workers was quite high; now we wish to carry out a vigorous "Vote No" campaign against the contract deal in TWU Local 100.

We also wish to continue with our free literature offers to prisoners, workfare workers and the unemployed. We hope to initiate serious distribution of our magazine and leaflets in Puerto Rico, and expect to be making a number of political trips abroad this Spring.

On top of these expenses, we need to replace an aged photocopier machine. Please send whatever you can afford to: Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008.

Indonesia: Mass Upheavals Face Betrayal

by Walter Daum and Matthew Richardson

Upheavals have continued to rock Indonesia and its conquered territories since the mass struggles by students and workers forced long-time dictator Suharto to resign in May 1998. Until and even after the selection of Abdurrahman Wahid as president in October 1999, demonstrations in Jakarta demanded "reformasi total," the total reform of the system, including an end to the economic and dictatorial power of the military and political leaders of the Suharto era.

Last year, protests in East Timor led to a referendum in

alist-backed coup in 1965, has sustained a popular image as a democrat and reformer by protesting some of the Suharto/Habibie regime's most repressive policies. But she has also made clear that she is no threat to the Indonesian state: she supported the IMF's austerity program and asserted Indonesia's right to rule East Timor.

Elections took place in June 1999, but only with the slightest of democratic pretensions. The atmosphere of repression against radicals and activists continued, and the elections were held on the basis of the Suharto dictatorship's



Students fighting police in Jakarta.

favor of national self-determination, bloody reprisals by the Indonesian military and eventually the tiny country's occupation by imperialist "peacekeeping" troops. Struggles for independence in other provinces, notably West Papua and Aceh, have escalated. In Aceh, as many as two million people have demonstrated for a referendum on self-determination.

But the capitalist politicians leading these movements have betrayed the demands of millions for an end to their grinding exploitation and oppression. A new Indonesian "government of national unity" has been formed in which popular "reform" leaders act as a fig-leaf covering the continued rule of Indonesia's military-bureaucratic rulers. As a result, the struggle in Indonesia has reached a critical stage. Betrayed by the leaders they have looked to, the masses are searching for a new way forward.

THE SEARCH FOR A DEMOCRATIC FACADE

The struggles of 1998 were temporarily quelled by the resignation of dictator Suharto and replacement by his long-time crony B.J. Habibie. But a new upsurge of demonstrations, strikes and street fighting by pro-democracy students and workers forced Habibie to call elections for a new government. The main challenger to Habibie's Golkar party was Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). Megawati, the daughter of Indonesia's first leader, Sukarno, who was ousted by Suharto's imper-

old constitution. Of the 700 seats in the People's Consultative Assembly, only 462 were popularly elected; 38 went to the military by "right" and the remaining 200 came from regional bodies dominated by Golkar.

All this was not enough to satisfy Golkar, which sought to further rig the elections to avoid a victory by the PDI-P. But growing mass demonstrations in favor of Megawati forced Habibie to announce that the PDI-P had resoundingly defeated Golkar, but had failed to win a majority by some 16 percent. Trailing these two were lesser opposition parties, including Abdurrahman Wahid's Muslim Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Amien Rais' National Mandate Party (PAN), as well as right-wing Golkar-aligned parties.

It was widely believed that the PDI-P had been robbed of a larger vote and perhaps even a majority, but Megawati accepted the result and defused the potential for a new upsurge. Nonetheless the PDI-P's victory was a blow to Indonesia's ruling class and imperialism, for it raised the masses' hopes for a government that would address its demands.

Thus opened a period of backroom deals between various parties to form a coalition government that could provide a democratic facade for the continued rule of Indonesia's bureaucratic-military ruling class. Megawati showed her commitment to capitalist stability by offering the Vice Presidency to the military head, General Wiranto. But before a combination satisfactory to the ruling class and imperialism could be

arrived at, new upheavals shook the country, first of all in East Timor. (See the following article on page 19.)

"MEGAWATI OR REVOLUTION"

The U.N. occupation stabilized East Timor for imperialism, but the Indonesian military's earlier terror campaign dealt a blow to their plans for creating a democratic facade for the Indonesian state. Habibie's government, and in particular its military, had once again been exposed as responsible for brutal oppression. The military's leading candidate for office in the new government was armed forces head General Wiranto, who masterminded the terror campaign in East Timor. If this didn't prove that continued rule by Golkar and the military would spur greater revolts, new turmoil in Indonesia itself did.

First, with the Indonesian economy sliding into deeper crisis, Golkar was exposed as responsible for continuing acts of corruption. Suharto's fall had revealed an enormous accumulation of wealth by the former dictator, modestly estimated at U.S. \$15 billion. When one of Indonesia's largest banks collapsed and had to be bailed out by an infusion of hundreds of millions of dollars, Golkar was exposed as having funneled millions of this money to its election campaign fund and to businesses owned by Golkar leaders.

The final straw came when, in the last days of the old parliament, before the new government was decided upon, Wiranto and Habibie tried to rush through a martial law bill that would have granted sweeping new repressive powers to the military. When word of this got out on September 23, thousands of mostly student demonstrators marched on parliament chanting "Revolution!" A police attack on one protest was met by demonstrators fighting the police with stones and firebombs well into the night. The next day the protests had grown to tens of thousands in every major city; Wiranto and Habibie were forced to withdraw the new law for fear of the movement growing.

This victory emboldened the masses to step up their struggles. Aware that Golkar and the military were trying to find a way to keep Megawati from the presidency, demonstrations with the demand "Reject Habibie!" led to further street fighting with the police. The protests quickly grew in size and boldness, marching behind banners proclaiming "Megawati or Revolution!"

It was now clear that a new government led by Habibie or Golkar would provoke even greater struggles. The rulers' fear of revolution was real. At the same time, Megawati's offer to form a government with General Wiranto as Vice President would now be viewed by the masses as too great a compromise. Thus Megawati could not be allowed to be

president, since her PDI-P has no apparatus capable of restraining the masses' struggles, and a Megawati presidency without a strong and prominent military presence would encourage those struggles.

So in a backroom deal, the presidency was awarded to Abdurahman Wahid (known as Gus Dur), the elderly Muslim leader who came in third in the Presidential vote. Megawati was named vice president after a night of rioting by tens of thousands of her cheated followers in the streets of Jakarta and other cities, during which she proved her loyalty to the bourgeoisie by appealing for calm "for the sake of national unity" - under capitalist rule. As *Time* magazine observed, "It was either Megawati or Mega-riots." The incompatibility of Megawati and revolution proved true indeed.

The cabinet organized by Wahid and Megawati, despite its sprinkling of new faces, provides further evidence that nothing fundamental will change. With six positions, the military is the largest single faction in the cabinet. General Wiranto was given the post supervising "security," i.e., military repression. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* observed:

All signs suggest that former armed-forces commander Gen. Wiranto, in his new post as coordinating minister for defense and security, has not only positioned himself at the heart of the Wahid government, but also retains effective leadership of the armed forces. (quoted in *Socialist Action*, Dec. 1999)

And since the formation of that government, President Wahid has spent most of his time abroad with government and business leaders and Megawati has played little role. Wiranto is indeed on top. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Dec. 3) reported:

Amid growing criticism that Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid has spent too much time overseas since being elected president on October 20, the former armed forces chief, General Wiranto, has emerged as the country's strongman. Now the minister for political affairs and security, General Wiranto has taken charge of Cabinet meetings and set the agenda, according to government sources.

NEW STRUGGLES INEVITABLE

The presidential deal is unlikely to hold off mass unrest for long. While the Indonesian masses have great hopes that the new government will institute democratic and economic reforms in their interests, these illusions will soon be dashed.

Indonesia's economy was badly hit by the Asian financial crisis that broke out two years ago; it remains the sickest in the region, paralyzed by the massive debt owed to imperialist financiers, with 40 million people now living below the official poverty line, double the figure of two years ago.

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The capitalists hope that the new government will be able to convince the masses to sacrifice where the Suharto and Habibie regimes could not. A clear statement of this plan was made by former Citibank executive Laksamana Sukardi, a senior PDI-P figure and adviser to Megawati who joined Wahid's cabinet as Minister of Investment and State Enterprises. After Suharto's ouster, Sukardi stated:

We need a transition period. Post-Suharto, the economy is going to be terrible. What we need is a leader who has influence and who is respected by the people, who can tell 200 million Indonesians to sacrifice more. (*Washington Post*, May 17, 1998.)

Wahid and Megawati have promised to continue Habibie's dedication to the "free market" policies that open the country to further imperialist exploitation. The IMF has already agreed to resume funding aid halted because of the latest banking scandal; but it demands massive privatizations and cuts in food and fuel subsidies as conditions of its loans, the very actions that triggered the uprising in May 1998. Such austerity attacks by the Wahid/Megawati government will inevitably spur mass workers' struggles.

The new government will similarly be unable to satisfy the demands of the Acehnese, West Papuans and others for independence. For example, while Wahid has promised Aceh a referendum on its future, he and Megawati have made clear that some form of limited autonomy is the most they can expect; independence will not be an option. Wahid openly promised a military crackdown if the Acehnese pursue their demand for independence:

Any attempt to separate Aceh from Indonesia is an act that cannot be tolerated. ... Aceh is part of our domain. ... We will use repressive forces if we are challenged. ... If there is no challenge, just an expression of their wishes, then it's OK. Why not? But if they challenge that, then we will do the repression. (Associated Press, Dec. 3.)

Both Wahid and Megawati have made clear that they will not end the "dual role" that gives the military an assured place in government. They similarly oppose the trial and punishment of the Suharto family and military leaders for corruption and atrocities. As new defense minister Juwono Sudarsono insisted:

We are willing to accept there was misuse of power... But you cannot go into the higher ranks, much less question their legitimacy. ... If we start disregarding that, there would be no end to it. We cannot win through democratic absolutism. (*Vancouver Sun*, Dec. 20.)

This is precisely the point. Conflicts will inevitably develop between the civilian bourgeois politicians and the military, over the extent to which the military will have to accept a subordinate role in order to try to pacify the masses' demands for democracy. But any struggle for democracy and justice threatens the entire Indonesian ruling class, and thus the bourgeois "reform" leaders will oppose any reforms that seriously challenge the military's power. The more pressing question for Indonesia's rulers will be whether their superficial reforms quell the masses' struggles for a time, or whether they will be forced to attempt a return to their previous method of rule: *military absolutism*.

THE PRD – AN ALTERNATIVE TO MEGAWATI?

Under these conditions, the workers and peasants urgently need an alternative leadership that can lead them out of the crisis. The main left organization claiming to represent such an alternative is the People's Democratic Party (PRD),

promoted internationally by groups like the Democratic Socialist Party in Australia and Solidarity in the U.S.

The PRD struggled courageously against Suharto and suffered heavy repression. However, far from representing an alternative to Megawati's PDI-P, the PRD's whole strategy has been to hang on to the coattails of the PDI-P. While it rails against capitalism as the source of the masses' problems, it maintains that the aim of the current struggles in Indonesia must be to win democracy. Only after this democratic stage is completed, argues the PRD, should the masses consider a struggle for socialism.

Thus, the PRD's program focuses on demands to repeal the Suharto-era laws which entrench the military's power, the trial and punishment of the Suharto regime's leaders for human rights abuses and corruption and a U.N.-controlled solution in East Timor – as well as a series of social reforms like a 100 percent wage raise for workers, the nationalization of industry, and land reform for the peasantry.

An independent struggle for democracy, however, would inevitably see the working class demand not just reforms of capitalism but the system's overthrow. Accordingly, the PRD advocated that the masses not struggle for power themselves but rather support the various bourgeois reform opponents and set as their strategic aim the formation of a "People's Coalition Government" led by Megawati, Wahid and Rais. The PRD writes in its program:

A democratic structure ... can only be institutionalized through a People's Coalition Government, that is, a coalition of progressive classes, sectors and groups in Indonesia that consistently struggles for democracy and social justice, holding to principles of democratic pluralism.

The PRD's role in this coalition would be:

To utilize the electoral space – the ability to speak to the masses – by advocating an independent program to the PDI (Megawati group) and NU (Wahid group) and to give critical support to them so long as their programs are not in conflict in their electoral campaigns, in their political actions and if the New Order government or armed forces interfere with them. (*Free Indonesia!*, July 1998.)

But the PRD's support for these bourgeois leaders was hardly very critical. At every turn in the struggle that overthrew Suharto, Megawati pleaded for moderation and supported the regime's key policies like its IMF austerity plan and its rule over East Timor. But the PRD did not use these betrayals to expose Megawati's pretensions as a reformer, warn the masses that she would betray them, or explain to them the need to build their own revolutionary alternative to the PDI-P.

On the contrary, while the PRD's international publication, *Free Indonesia!*, cited Megawati's policies as examples of "what's wrong with the Indonesian opposition," in its work among the masses the PRD encouraged mindless support to Megawati. In an article reprinted from the PRD's newspaper, *Pembebasan* at the time of the 1998 elections, PRD Central Committee member Mirah Mahardika suggested that the masses should campaign for Megawati to be nominated for President by "demonstrating, or putting Megawati posters on cars, walls and so on. Or by writing Megawati's name on walls. To draw the support of the people, we must also distribute Mega's pictures or writings." (March 1, 1998.)

The illusions in Megawati that the PRD promoted came through clearly in a letter written to *Pembebasan* by a rank-and-file member of the PRD:

The PRD and the Megawati-PDI have been opening the

eyes of the masses to the true character of the New Order [the Suharto regime]. . . . The Megawati-PDI is continuing the struggle despite all the intimidation and deceit, confident of the ultimate victory. The PRD also continues the struggle . . . to awaken the masses to resist.

No, in order to prevent the masses' struggle from threatening the Indonesian ruling class, Megawati has sought to blind the masses with talk about reform. In this, she has been ably assisted by volunteers from the PRD leadership.

We have not been able to determine whether the PRD supported Megawati or other bourgeois reform candidates in the 1999 elections, or whether Megawati's betrayals became too extreme for them to be able to justify continuing their support. They have certainly not rethought their strategy of supporting these counterrevolutionary "democrats," continuing to insist that their calling for a democratic coalition government remains correct. In any case, by the time of the 1999 elections the PRD's promotion of Megawati had already done its damage to the masses' political consciousness.

The government headed by "reformers" but dominated by the military presented the PRD with a political dilemma. In an interview with Australia's *Green Left Weekly*, a PRD Central Committee member explained:

The formation of the new government . . . has brought with it a totally different political environment. On the one hand it has created more democratic space, but at the same time, it has made some aspects of our work far more difficult and complex. Gus Dur and Megawati have a significant base of support among ordinary people, and many consider the new government to be legitimate and representative. (Dec. 8.)

The PRD of course does not for a moment admit its role in encouraging such illusions in Megawati and Wahid. It has denounced the role of the military in the new government, and continues to campaign for basic democratic and social reforms. As another PRD leader explained, the PRD aims "to force Gus Dur to prove himself to the people. By campaigning around specific demands, such as for the trial of former president Suharto and his cronies, we can expose the true nature of the new regime. We can show the people that it is not, and has never been, committed to *reformasi total*."

Indeed such a campaign must be conducted. But with all the "reformers" they supported having betrayed the struggle for democracy, how can the PRD continue to say that the masses must still fight for democracy without challenging capitalism? If the PRD succeeds in exposing Megawati and Wahid, will it only find another set of bourgeois "democratic" leaders to promote?

The PRD's bankrupt perspective is a danger for the working class. Mass struggles against the government's looming austerity attacks and protection of the military's power may well again threaten revolution. Under these conditions, Megawati may be forced to adopt a more radical program and even break from the government and lead the PDI-P as a new opposition - in order to corral the masses and prevent any struggle to overthrow the entire system. Or perhaps another bourgeois politician will try to play such a role. In this likely scenario, we can expect that the PRD will again volunteer to promote bourgeois "reformers" and again disarm the masses in the face of betrayal.

As we explained in a previous article (see *PR 57*), this type of stagist perspective was responsible for one of the greatest working-class defeats in the past half-century in Indonesia. In the late 1950's and '60's, the working class

launched powerful struggles, with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) at its head. But led by Stalinists committed to limiting the revolution to a democratic stage, the (PKI) restrained the workers and supported the rule of bourgeois nationalist Sukarno, leaving the masses defenseless against the counterrevolutionary Suharto coup that slaughtered hundreds of thousands.

FOR PERMANENT REVOLUTION!

If the Indonesian workers are to avoid another tragic betrayal, they must learn the lessons of their struggle so far. In this epoch of capitalism's decay, the struggle for democracy cannot succeed without the overthrow of capitalism. In neo-colonial and colonial countries like Indonesia, economic domination by imperialism means that the masses must be kept in chains of poverty and superexploitation. Without the economic base that can sustain a privileged middle class with a stake in social stability, democracy is an intolerable threat to the neo-colonial capitalists, who must rely increasingly on their armed forces to rule.

Moreover, imperialist domination limits the potential for any development of economic power by the local capitalists. Dependent on loans and technology from the imperialists for any significant economic development, the capitalist classes of the Third World find that their property is interpenetrated with that of the imperialists, for whom they act fundamentally as local agents. That Indonesia is ruled by a military-bureaucratic class reliant on state power for its own profits, as well as for repressing the masses, is not an aberration or the effect of extreme corruption, but the form capitalism increasingly takes in the Third World in particular. Thus we see that Indonesia's supposedly exceptional case of "crony capitalism" is matched in countries like the Congo where Mobutu's old "kleptocracy" ruled for so long only to be replaced by the no less corrupt Laurent Kabila, and even in some weak imperialist countries like Russia where "free market democrats" supposedly rule over a "mafia capitalism."

This explains why all of Indonesia's reform leaders act as fig-leaves for the military-bureaucratic ruling class built up during the Suharto era. It is why the previously left-wing independence leaders in East Timor choose to sacrifice the lives of their followers and wait for an imperialist invasion of their country rather than promote an armed defense of the masses. To do otherwise would be to encourage a struggle that threatens the very foundations of the capitalist system to which they are dedicated.

Only the working class can lead the struggle for democracy and national liberation, because it has no stake in the capitalist system. Organized at the centers of industrial power, the working class can organize the massive peasantry in a struggle against the landlords and offer a way out of rural enslavement. Only a socialist revolution that smashes the ruling class's state power, builds a workers' state with the support of the peasantry and reorganizes the economy in the interests of the masses can win democracy in Indonesia.

Of course if isolated in one country, a successful revolution in Indonesia could not survive for long, much less build socialism. But it would be a huge step toward inspiring similar revolutions, first across Southeast Asia made ripe for revolutionary struggle by economic crisis. The carrying over of the struggle for democratic demands into proletarian revolution, along with the extension of the revolution internationally, is the strategy of *permanent revolution*, first formulated by Marx when the German bourgeoisie betrayed the

democratic revolution against feudalism in the mid-1800's. The application of this strategy to the rest of the world was first drawn by Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky in the 1920's, when it became clear that under imperialism, the bourgeoisie could not lead the struggle for democracy because it depends on the imperialists and reactionaries.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN INDONESIA!

To find its way out of the present crisis, the Indonesian working class needs a revolutionary party made up of the most class-conscious workers. Building that vanguard party is the most important task of the day. The time to campaign within the working class for revolution and socialism is now, when the class forces are fiercely counterposed and the political situation is seething – not in the indefinite future.

With promotion of socialist ideas still illegal in Indonesia, the core of the revolutionary party and its press will have to be built underground. This does not mean that the party can be built outside of the masses' day-to-day struggles, or outside of the legal organizations that lead them. Revolutionaries must combine their underground work with participation in trade unions, student groups and the like, and combine legal propaganda tailored to avoid repression, with underground propaganda that explains the revolutionary socialist conclusions to be drawn from the struggles.

Propaganda and education of the most class-conscious workers must be the immediate priority. But the revolutionary party will only win the support of workers when the latter are able to test the party's ideas in the heat of the struggle. While there can be no separate democratic stage of the struggle, revolutionaries do not stand aside from the masses' struggle for democracy. On the contrary, revolutionaries must take the lead in joining with the masses who expected *reformasi total* from the Wahid/Megawati government in continuing the struggle for their demands. They must raise the call to *End the Dual Role of the Military!* Suharto and the other heads of the regime must be put on trial for their crimes, and their economic empires nationalized. The right to self-determination must be granted to Aceh, West Papua and Indonesia's other oppressed peoples.

But revolutionaries do not raise these demands to create trust in Wahid or Megawati or illusions in the possibility of reforming the system. Rather, they warn that these leaders will betray the struggle, that any serious reform struggle will be met by armed repression, and that the only way to win these aims is by the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. The aim of raising the demands would be to forge a united struggle of the masses in order to put their illusions to the test and help them learn on the basis of their own experience that socialist revolution is the only solution.

Revolutionaries also recognize that democratic questions

are not necessarily, or even most likely, those which the vast masses of workers and peasants will be first mobilized around. More likely is resistance against further economic attacks by the government and bosses. Revolutionaries would advocate a *general strike* as the best way to mobilize the full power of the working class against such attacks and for improvements in working and living conditions. By uniting the masses in struggle, a general strike would make clear the need for a political solution to the crisis, and revolutionaries would seek every opportunity to explain the need to link struggles around jobs and wages to the working class's need to win democracy and political power.

A general strike is a massive and explosive form of struggle that needs flexible, mass organizations. While participation in building trade unions and similar organizations is very important, revolutionaries would seek to explain the need to form broader *workers' and peasants councils* where all questions of struggle could be discussed and decided on, and leaders elected to take charge of the struggle. With revolutionary leadership, these councils could develop into organs of future working-class state power.

And revolutionaries would take every opportunity to dispel pacifist illusions that even significant reforms can be struggled for and won without a violent clash with the armed might of the capitalist state. On the one hand, revolutionaries would spread the idea of the working class arming, training and organizing for self-defense. On the other hand, revolutionaries would make every attempt to take the lead in propagandizing among the ranks of the army to organize against the officers and ruling class, who use them to repress their brother and sister workers. The Indonesian army is not a monolithic and invincible force but rests on poor workers and peasants forced into military service by the state; soldiers can be mobilized to split the army and form *soldiers' councils* of struggle alongside those of the workers' and peasants. With the working class convinced of the need to seize power, the arming of the workers and the winning of the worker and peasant base of the army away from the officers would be the prerequisites for an insurrectionary seizure of power.

These are the basic elements of a revolutionary program for the Indonesian working class. The initiation of such a struggle by the most class conscious workers would not only be a tremendous step toward building the revolutionary party and the struggle for socialism in Indonesia. It would be a great step toward the task of rebuilding the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution, that the world's workers need to overthrow imperialism. ●

*For a Revolutionary Working-Class Party in Indonesia!
Self-Determination for East Timor, Aceh and West Papua!
Down with the IMF! Repudiate the Imperialist Debts!
For a Socialist Federation of Asia!*

Bloody Betrayal in East Timor

Since its occupation of East Timor in 1975, Indonesia's military has maintained a reign of terror over the country that claimed as many as 250,000 victims. They did so in order to protect their control of East Timor's off-shore oil and other natural resources. In return, the imperialists – in particular, the U.S., Britain and Australia – financed, armed, trained and even directed the military's operations.

Against tremendous odds, the East Timorese conducted a long and heroic resistance to Indonesian rule. When

Suharto was ousted, the East Timorese population felt emboldened to step up their struggle, organizing rallies of thousands in the capital, Dili. These protests forced the U.N. to step in and organize a referendum on East Timor's future.

The militias run by the Indonesian military had escalated their attacks in the lead-up to the referendum and openly promised a scorched earth policy if the people voted for independence. When the East Timorese responded by voting overwhelmingly for independence, they followed through on

their threat, launching a brutal terror campaign. In the end, most of the country was economically destroyed, including electricity and water supplies, hospitals, schools, housing and transport. Militia thugs butchered thousands and drove hundreds of thousands into concentration camps in West Timor.

IMPERIALISM PROTECTS ITS INTERESTS

The upheaval in East Timor presented imperialism with a double threat. On the one hand, the struggle for independence threatened to inspire movements in other colonies of Indonesia and revive the revolutionary struggles of the Indonesian masses. On the other, the state's bloody repression threatened to expose its pretensions to reform.

International pressure to intervene and stop the slaughter mounted, with East Timorese leaders and mass demonstrations in Portugal and Australia begging for U.N. action. Under the cover of diplomatic wrangling, the imperialists deliberately stalled long enough to allow the Indonesian forces to spread terror across the country. Considering its supposed sympathy for oppressed peoples that has been used to justify its wars against Iraq and Serbia, the U.S.'s inaction was blatantly hypocritical. A front-page article in the *New York Times* (Sept. 9) blandly observed:

The [Clinton] Administration ... has made the calculation that the United States must put its relationship with Indonesia, a mineral-rich nation of more than 200 million people, ahead of its concern over the political fate of East Timor, a tiny, impoverished territory of 800,000 people.

Meanwhile, the U.S. secretly encouraged the Indonesian military. As journalist Allen Nairn (who was later jailed by the Indonesian regime) revealed, during the militia's rampage in April, while the U.S. was publicly stating that it wanted Indonesia to rein in the militias, U.S. Admiral Dennis Blair, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific fleet, met with Wiranto and delivered a different message:

According to a classified cable on the meeting, circulating at Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii, Blair, rather than telling Wiranto to shut the militias down, instead offered him a series of promises of new U.S. assistance. (*The Nation*, Sept. 27)

Given Indonesia's military and economic dependence, the imperialist powers could have used their clout with the Indonesian military if they had wanted to stop the militia's devastation. Instead, after the devastation was completed, a U.N.-mandated "peacekeeping" force known as Interfet was sent in, promising to liberate East Timor. But the real aim of the invasion was to prop up capitalist rule where the Indonesian state no longer could. As we warned at the time:

At a time of great economic crisis and growing working-class unrest in Southeast Asia ... the capitalists know they must cover their dictatorial rule with a democratic facade lest they encourage greater, revolutionary, struggles throughout the region. ... The purpose of this [invading] force is not to liberate the East Timorese. Rather, it is to help reconstruct the Indonesian rulers' democratic pretensions as well as their own, and protect capitalist investments in East Timor. ... The U.N. intervention will do more for the Indonesian ruling class and the imperialists than help the East Timorese. Worse, it will represent a grave threat to the East Timorese most important allies, the Indonesian masses. With its "peacekeeping" occupation of East Timor as a cover, the imperialists now have a convenient staging area from which to "restore order" when the Indonesian workers and students escalate their

struggle.

This analysis has been fully confirmed by events. The imperialist occupying force has so far failed to repatriate the hundreds of thousands of East Timorese driven into concentration camps in West Timor by the military – indeed Interfet says it can only account for the whereabouts of less than a fifth of the entire population. Interfet has moved to disarm pro-independence guerrillas and keep the East Timorese from exercising any powers of self-rule, promising a handover of power in three years' time. And it has sabotaged any attempt to investigate the Indonesian military for war crimes.

The Australian-led invasion has particularly boosted Australian imperialism's role in directly protecting its investments in Southeast Asia, as well as those of its senior imperialist partner, the U.S. It is little wonder that the Australian bourgeoisie led the U.N. intervention. Australia borders the Timor Sea; London's *Financial Times* reported that "Australian companies have agreements with the Indonesian government for 50 per cent of the proceeds from oil exploration in the Timor Sea," and Australian mining giant BHP has heavy investments in East Timor. As part of their deal with Interfet, East Timor's leaders have already agreed to honor Australia's rights to East Timor's wealth.

Australian prime minister John Howard, in an embarrassing moment of honesty, announced that the intervention represented a new foreign policy based on his forces' expanded role – as the U.S.'s "deputy" in policing Southeast Asia. Australia has been a junior imperialist power all along, but Howard's announcement projected a new policy, whereby Australia acts openly as a local imperialist rather than through alliances with various Asian trading partners. Government leaders in Malaysia and Thailand denounced the "Howard Doctrine" as arrogant and racist, and indeed the U.S. government was not pleased with its frankness either. Howard backtracked, but Australia remains in East Timor, keeping the country safe for imperialism. Indeed when the U.S. was explaining its initial reluctance to intervene, a spokesman said, "We don't have a dog running in the East Timor race". But later he added "We have a very big dog running down there called Australia and we have to support it." (Quotes from *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1999.) Thus for perhaps the first time, a great power itself designated its junior partner as a "running dog" of imperialism.

EAST TIMORESE LEADERS' BETRAYAL

Given Western imperialism's long and stubborn support for Indonesia's brutal rule over East Timor, our analysis required only a basic understanding of the class interests of the powers involved and an honest accounting of the facts. But the facts of imperialist rule in East Timor did not stop the leaders of the East Timorese independence movement, as well as the reformist left internationally, from calling for and supporting the U.N. intervention. The National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), headed by guerrilla leader Xanana Gusmao and including the Nobel Peace Prize winners José Ramos Horta and Bishop Carlos Belo, as well as former collaborators with Indonesia like Mario Carrascalao (who was Suharto's governor of East Timor for ten years), urged the "international community" to help militarily.

It is not surprising that the nationalist East Timorese leaders relied on the U.N. and the imperialist powers. Even though they have fought at the risk of their own lives, their goal has been to achieve an independent East Timor without the overthrow of the Indonesian ruling class or challenging

imperialism. Having depended more upon winning imperialist good will for their aims than mass struggle, they saw no alternative to a supposedly benevolent imperialist takeover.

Rather than prepare his armed followers for struggle against the Indonesian forces' terror campaign after the independence vote, Gusmao ordered them to not lift a finger to stop the slaughter. Instead the liberation leaders spread the illusion that the U.N. would be the East Timorese people's savior; thus they helped pave the way for the killing.

The *Financial Times*'s Sander Thoenes, one of a handful of courageous journalists who reported from the scene on the Indonesian terror campaign, wrote as follows on September 9 – a few days before he was murdered by the militias:

Mr. Gusmao's detention in Jakarta since 1992 has turned him into a very cautious, diplomatic politician. He was sometimes too diplomatic for his own commanders, whom he kept under orders to refrain from attacking soldiers even as they deported and killed thousands of Timorese.

A report in the *New York Times* (October 1) cited one Falintil guerrilla's expression of being "heartsick" at the order to "look on passively as his people were terrorized and killed." "We have fought for 24 years without any international support" the guerilla added. "Now Falintil trusts the multinational force. We respect that they are now the ruling power."

Indeed the CNRT's leaders are going out of their way to prove themselves to the imperialists as "responsible" future rulers. They have agreed that the U.N. will rule over East Timor as its protectorate for a number of years and have formed a "Transitional Council of National Unity" to "be the main organ of dialogue" with the U.N. regime. CNRT leaders have wasted no time in meeting with regional governments and the World Bank, looking for loans in return for promises of the usual profits for the imperialists. Ramos Horta, on his return to East Timor, emphasized the CNRT's commitment to establishing "good relations with Indonesia," praising Indonesian president Wahid as an "extraordinary human being" – actually nothing new, since Horta had hailed B.J. Habibie in similar terms during his brief rule. Horta even called for prominent pro-Jakarta East Timorese leaders like Lopes da Cruz and Salvador Soares (who backed the Indonesian military's campaign of terror against the independence movement) to join the CNRT government-in-waiting (*Sydney Morning Herald*, Dec. 2.)

SOCIALISTS IN SUPPORT OF IMPERIALISM

It is tragic that out of desperation, many East Timorese looked to the imperialists as their only hope. But it is inexcusable that "progressive" activists and even socialists called for and endorsed the occupation of East Timor by imperialist troops.

The Socialist Party of Timor (PST) calls itself a Marxist but anti-Stalinist organization that is studying the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky. It broke from Fretilin around 1980, in opposition to the latter's policy of "national unity" with even conservative Christian organizations. But today, having joined the chorus of appeals for the imperialists to invade, it is uniting with those very organizations in the Transition Council.

The Indonesian PRD also called for the dispatch of U.N. troops to East Timor. In fact the PRD had all along supported an imperialist solution to East Timor's demand for independence. The PRD National Committee's 1996 resolution on East Timor called for the Indonesian state "to reduce military operations and administration in East Timor and to

hand it over to multinational peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN, as we have seen in Bosnia, Ethiopia and Cambodia." (*Free Indonesia!*, No. 1, July 1998.)

This call was echoed by the Australian Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), which betrayed its supposed opposition to Australian imperialism by specifically demanding that Australian troops be sent. The DSP has gone on to enthusiastically report on the formation of the Council of National Unity, thus failing not only to advocate working-class independence from bourgeois nationalists like Gusmao and Horta, but even from Suharto henchmen like Carrascalao.

The Australian ASIET organization (Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor), supported by the DSP, has



Indonesian forces drove half a million East Timorese out of their country.

long called for U.N. sovereignty over East Timor, not immediate independence. Similarly, the U.S.-based East Timor Action Network has demanded that the U.N. "be granted control of administration and security in East Timor." And many socialists and activists around the world who in the past denounced U.N. sanctions against Iraq for the sound reason that economic strangulation hurts the workers and peasants, not the ruling-class politicians and capitalists, changed their line and demanded sanctions by the imperialists against Indonesia. In the U.S., these include the socialist Solidarity organization and the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation and War Resisters League. Internationally, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, which claims to be the legitimate heir of Trotskyism, approved the U.N. intervention (and absurdly demanded that the imperialists subordinate themselves to the East Timorese fighters they came to disarm).

THE WORKING-CLASS ALTERNATIVE

What choice was there for socialist and working-class organizations? Many sincere defenders of the East Timorese say there was no alternative to U.N. intervention and see opposition to it as showing callous disregard for those facing death at the hands of the Indonesian military. But as we have seen, the imperialists never intended to stop the slaughter of the East Timorese masses.

Revolutionary internationalists stood not for imperialist intervention but for armed struggle by the East Timorese

themselves, and for every international effort to supply the masses with arms and aid for this purpose. As for outside support, it was the Indonesian working class's strikes and



Indonesian cops brutalize East Timorese

demonstrations that forced Suharto out and opened the way for the most recent struggles of the East Timorese.

Indonesia's independent unions came out in favor of East Timorese independence. Thousands of Indonesians battled with police in protests in Jakarta in defense of the East Timorese. Instead of supporting the imperialists, communist revolutionaries see in these struggles the way forward.

Our September statement said:

The Indonesian workers have the power to put an end to the militarist "democracy" that preserves capitalist rule and imperialist plunder under Suharto's henchman and successor Habibie. We urge the Indonesian unions to

launch mass demonstrations for East Timor's independence and prepare a general strike to that end. Such a general strike before the imperialists cement their position in East Timor could enormously strengthen the working class of Indonesia in the face of the coming crackdown. It could offer new – and real – hope to the beleaguered East Timorese. Such a challenge to state power could ignite the seething masses of the "Pacific Rim."

Workers elsewhere also had a crucial role to play. Australian unions boycotted Indonesian shipping and other businesses. Their bans were acts of solidarity with the Timorese, whose oppressors had long been in league with the Australian capitalists and governments. But the unions also supported the sending of Australian troops. Revolutionaries would have opposed all union motions that include calls for imperialist military intervention. And now that the troops are there, there is no reason for

continued bans on Indonesian goods, since the imperialist occupier of East Timor is now the U.N.

At the beginning of this century and the dawn of the epoch of imperialist domination of the world, various "progressives" and "democratic socialists" endorsed "socialist colonialism" as a means to "civilize the backward countries." Those who support imperialist intervention today are their political descendants. After the First World War, the imperialists used League of Nations protectorates to prop up colonialism; today it is U.N. "peacekeeping" occupations that prop up neo-colonialism. Phony socialist justifications for colonialism have been replaced by phony democratic ones. ●

Cold-Blooded Police Killing in Baltimore

This report on the struggle against police brutality in Baltimore was sent in by a friend of the LRP; an earlier version appeared in a local anarchist paper, Claustrophobia. We hope its publication here will bring it to a wider audience geographically and promote discussion.

In the light of the upset over the Diallo trial in New York, the article poses important questions regarding illusions about reforming the police and the need for a new strategy to win sustainable gains in the fight against police brutality.

by Curtis Price

On October 7, Larry Hubbard was shot to death by police in the Midway neighborhood, one of the poorest in an already poor city, where the drug trade plays a primary role in the area's micro-economy. Hubbard's shooting was the 15th by cops this year, five of which were fatal. But unlike the other four mostly young Black men murdered in police killings in 1999, Hubbard's death achieved a high level of visibility and has spawned more than a half a dozen investigations, ranging from the FBI to the expected local internal police department inquiries.

A major reason why this visibility exists and continues to linger is that unlike the other shootings, Hubbard's death was witnessed by a large number of neighborhood residents, who described what amounted to a systematic execution. Accord-

ing to several of these witnesses, Hubbard was shackled in handcuffs on the ground and heard pleading loudly for his life when one officer Hamilton placed a gun by the back of his head and pulled the trigger. Needless to say, this was hotly denied by the police, who claim Hubbard was trying to reach for the officer's gun when it mysteriously went off.

The number of witnesses claiming to see a different sequence of events than what was stated by the cops has a striking parallel with the James Quarles incident two summers ago. Quarles, a street peddler, was shot to death in front of hundreds of witnesses milling around Lexington Market on a Saturday afternoon. Furthermore, Quarles' death was videotaped by a passerby and the tape later broadcast on the national news. But so far the Hubbard case seems to eclipse Quarles' case in generating ongoing public concern. There are two major reasons why this is so.

MURDER AND POLITICS

The first has to do with the larger political context. Hubbard's murder took place after a hotly contested Democratic mayoral primary campaign where one of the few distinguishing issues in a field of three blandly reformist, pro-business candidates (which could only be charitably described as the race of the evil lessers) was their attitudes on adopting zero tolerance policing tactics in Baltimore.

Zero tolerance is a new method of policing first used in New York City and since adopted by several other U.S. cities; it claims that cracking down on previously disregarded petty "nuisance" crimes like public alcohol drinking and loitering will lead to a decline in more serious crimes. In reality, zero tolerance gives the police a green light to step up harassment and arrests of Black and Latino youth. Although zero tolerance supporters claim such tactics have reduced the crime rate, crime rates have plummeted just as dramatically in cities that haven't adopted zero tolerance techniques.

The primary winner, the evilly photogenic Martin O'Malley, made zero tolerance a cornerstone of his campaign. For many, Hubbard's shooting seemed a direct confirmation of the worst fears surrounding zero tolerance – and that under an O'Malley regime Baltimore would go through the same increased conflict between cops and residents as New York, where the police have been given a blank check to run roughshod over the inner city.

But O'Malley's victory also signaled a sea change in the struggle for control of the local city bureaucracy, with a threatened cleansing of many key city departments studiously built up under the twelve years of the Kurt Schmoke administration. Overshadowing the usual power struggle for patronage jobs and influential positions between victorious ins and defeated outs are the racial dynamics. Schmoke's appointees, overwhelmingly from the layer of educated Black middle-class professionals, stand to be replaced by O'Malley appointees – a possible reversal of gains won by this layer during Schmoke's regime.

Hubbard's shooting thus became a magnet for larger fears and concerns generated by O'Malley's victory, especially the symbolism of a white "law and order" mayor being elected in a majority-Black city. It is common in Baltimore protests around police brutality to see demonstrations cohabited by Black politicians, whose views dominate the media and court activities, and the left; the latter does the street organizing in Baltimore in the absence of a figure like Al Sharpton who can be somewhat adept at straddling the gulf between the Black middle class and oppressed workers.

In the recent protests, the main protagonists were the All People's Congress (basically a front group for Workers World Party) and the Uhuru House (a local group affiliated with the National People's Democratic Uhuru Movement and the African People's Socialist Party). In Baltimore, as in other U.S. cities with large Black populations, this layer of politicians arose as a result of the social struggles of the 1960's, particularly the riots which swept through urban areas in the wake of the shooting of Martin Luther King, Jr.

ARMED RETALIATION?

While struggles subsided, Black politicians succeeded in being elected to office, where against a backdrop of steadily declining federal fiscal aid to cities starting in the 1980's, this layer has often ended up overseeing austerity programs like cutbacks in and privatization of city services which have affected the working class and poor the most. At the same time, capturing political office has given a small layer of Black professionals a vested interest in administering the inequities of the system while occasionally offering small concessions to their base. In the case of Baltimore – one of the poorest large cities in the U.S., with an estimated one out of eight residents addicted, a life expectancy rate for Black men lower than some Third World countries and higher than

average poverty rate levels – there have been precious few crumbs to dispense.

The second major reason why the Hubbard shooting didn't disappear from the spotlight after a week were the persistent rumors of possible retaliation against the police by members of Hubbard's crew, the True Outlaw Clique. Although not discussed openly by the authorities, it is clear there was a real fear things could blow up in a big way. In contrast to all the other recent police killings, this explains why the Vanguard Justice Society (the Black police officers' association), quickly volunteered a one-off plainclothes patrol of the neighborhood to "cool things down," seven separate inquiries were announced in rapid succession, and everyone in a position of authority pleaded like a Greek chorus for "calm" while the wheels of justice roll on.

Whether real or imagined, the specter of armed retaliation lurked silently in the background for the first several weeks after Hubbard's shooting. At its height, the organized protest campaign held one very visible rally outside the Pratt Library during the candidates' debate, followed by smaller vigils and a disruption of a City Council hearing. Despite the widely read *Sun* newspaper having printed details about the event the day before, the Pratt Library rally turned out only a disappointing 150-200 people max. Alongside genuine speeches by neighborhood residents and relatives of Hubbard was a lot of empty traditional leftist rhetorical bullshit, such as threats to "burn the city down" and talks of "fascism."

This struck me as quite stupid. For one, you only sell that sort of wolf tickets when you have fifteen or twenty thousand people in front of you – and you better be sure they are prepared to do something more than listen to speeches. Secondly, to scream "fascism" over what is, after all, a case of the normal functioning of the system, strikes me as a roundabout way of letting the system off the hook by pretending Hubbard's shooting is something extraordinary or different. Any basic reading of U.S. history will tell you otherwise, because the American state has always been exceptionally brutal and bloodthirsty towards its own citizens, even in comparison with other states.

It is no accident that there was also a visible presence by mid- and upper-level bureaucrats from city departments, such as Housing, along with losing candidate Carl Stokes and other Black Democratic Party machine figures at the protest outside the Pratt Library.

Protests around specific cases of police brutality have in-built limits and are difficult to sustain in the long run. Inquiries are designed to quell potential anger while appearing as an impartial concession to community "concern." But the Hubbard shooting will not be forgotten; memory of it will still circulate covertly in Baltimore's "hidden transcript" (i.e. the talk on the corners, the stoops and in bars in working-class areas) and may resurface unexpectedly again, especially if O'Malley makes good on his promise to impose zero tolerance (now hastily rechristened "quality of life" policing) and its harsh results become obvious.●

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How Can We Win Justice for Amadou Diallo?

by Evelyn Kaye

Last winter, thousands of people in New York City rallied again and again for one purpose: to ensure that the four cops who murdered Amadou Diallo would be duly punished. How many times were racist cops going to be able to shoot down Black people – and then get off with a concocted story of “justifiable self-defense”? How many Black young people would be sentenced to die because they were “guilty” of reaching for a fabricated or imagined weapon – a water pistol, cigarette lighter, a beeper or cell phone?

Indeed, the movement in New York last year was militant and sustained – and not just because 41 shots were fired. Countless acts of racist police brutality had preceded the Diallo atrocity. The point was to finally secure some “justice” and make sure the Diallo case wouldn’t fade away.

But on December 16, five judges of a state appellate court granted an unprecedented change of venue for the criminal trial of the police murderers. Jury selection begins January 31 in conservative, mainly white Albany County.

The trial had been originally scheduled to start in the Bronx in New York City, where the crime occurred, on January 3. The pretext for the move was that the unusual amount of protest and coverage over the Diallo issue last year made it impossible to find an “unbiased” jury in the city. It makes perfect sense in the capitalist system that a pro-cop, mainly white jury is “unbiased,” while a jury consisting of people of color and suspicious of the racist police thugs is “biased.”

ANATOMY OF A FAILURE?

The pressure of the large and persistent demonstrations last year resulted in a rare indictment of the cops. Mass pressure also forced the stiff charge of second-degree murder, which is even rarer. Nevertheless, at this point the powers-that-be felt they could risk the public outcry that moving the trial to Albany would produce.

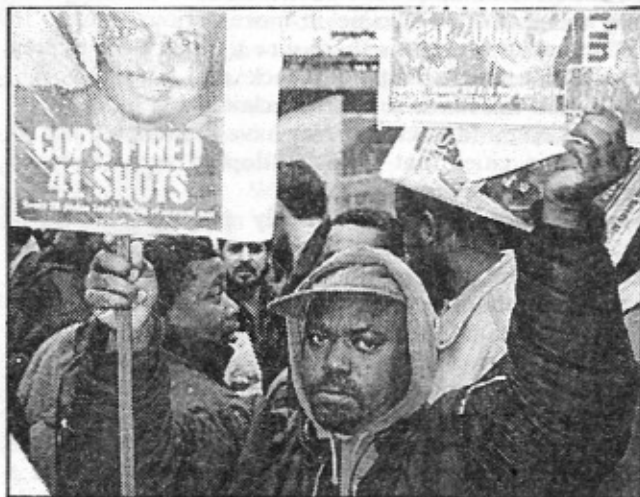
The unexpected turn makes it necessary for militants committed to the fight against police brutality to re-evaluate political strategy. After Diallo was shot down last year, the initial protests were large angry outpourings, mainly of Africans and American Blacks. Then Rev. Al Sharpton organized a series of civil disobedience activities at police headquarters featuring staged arrests of politicians and movie stars.

Although he is credited for keeping the issue of police brutality in the public light, there is a big problem with his strategy. In our full discussion of the struggle (see PR 59), we argued that civil disobedience, while it helped win the indictment, would hardly be enough to really shake up the system; it was in fact a dead end. We pointed out:

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Thousands protested police murder of Amadou Diallo.

Sharpton relies on civil disobedience as a substitute strategy for militant mass action. . . . Claiming that he was leading a “new civil rights movement,” he in fact demobilized the masses, as the politicians and middle-class liberals took center stage for week after week of photo opportunities.

We were right. Now others are beginning to criticize the policy publicly as well. Black lawyer Louis Clayton Jones, an advocate for police brutality victims, noted recently, “This is hardly the time for prayer vigils and symbolic rallies.” He described this strategy as “calculated solely to divert the attention of the black masses from the reality of life and death.” (*Village Voice*, Dec. 28.)

Hearing the shocking news of the move to Albany, many working-class people had the reaction: the system is wiggling out of it once again. But what is Sharpton’s strategy?

We are already arranging a caravan of buses to take people up there, and we may walk there as we did in 1995 . . . protesting the budget. . . . They better get ready because Amadou’s Army is on the way. (*Amsterdam News*, Dec. 23.)

Massive demonstrations would be fine, but Sharpton is really talking about more hollow chants of “No Justice, No Peace” and more staged arrests by handfuls. Nothing new – hardly the kind of “army” that would terrify the authorities at this point.

The system is still worried, and not because of Sharpton – the danger is the mass anger that Sharpton may not be able to control. Only eight years ago, the notorious Simi Valley not-guilty verdict exonerated the cops who beat Rodney King to a bloody pulp. That decision sparked the Los Angeles riot that reverberated across the country and shook up the American political scene. When Sharpton, Rev. Jesse Jackson and even Minister Louis Farrakhan tried to calm things down, they were rightfully ignored, especially by the youth. No wonder much of the mainstream media objects to the openly racist move to Albany. The last thing the ruling class wants is a similar rebellion in the heart of New York.

Sharpton is still willing to work overtime as a savior for the system. Another safety valve could be federal “monitoring.” As Assemblyman Keith Wright, head of the state Black,

Puerto Rican and Hispanic Legislative Caucus, stated:

There will be a lot of anger in the streets of Albany and in New York City if justice is not served, and that's the primary reason that we have requested that the Justice Department monitor the trial.

But there is no guarantee that Sharpton or the feds can stop an explosion if the cops get off in Albany. Unpredictable political factors will determine how masses react to a not-guilty or slap-on-the-wrist verdict. It is possible that their outrage will find no other outlet than an unorganized riot like Los Angeles. Under other circumstances, there could be smaller outbursts of militancy, but the dominant feeling could be demoralization, a sense that to struggle is hopeless.

MASS ACTION TO DEMAND JUSTICE

However, the working class in New York has the power to overcome both feelings of powerlessness and unfocused expressions of outrage with organized, powerful forms of struggle. Our class can put a chokehold on the economy, which can accomplish a great deal. We all saw how frightened the city bosses were of the prospect of a transit strike.

Black, Latino and anti-racist white workers can force the unions to use their full power to fight police brutality. Right now the unions are the only big working-class organizations that exist. The unions must be forced to go on record in favor of a one-day general strike to protest any outrageous incident of police brutality. Indeed, had even a one-day protest strike occurred in New York after the Diallo killing, the threat to the city's economy would have been so great that the bosses couldn't risk so blatant a maneuver as switching the trial to Albany.

The struggle has to move forward now; we urge our readers to join us in this effort. In the unions and community

organizations we must popularize the notion of strike action in case of a not-guilty verdict or its equivalent. If the unions were to put themselves on record now in favor of unified strike action – a general strike – Albany would get the message too. At the same time, organizations that claim to represent the interests of people of color – from the Nation of Islam to the NAACP – must be challenged to go on record in favor of strike action. These organizations have done little beyond rhetoric about police brutality, but if they called for a strike it would put tremendous pressure on the unions to act – and put fear in the hearts of the ruling class.

As Marxist revolutionaries, our job is not to sugarcoat reality. Fighting for strike action in the miserable unions that exist today is an uphill battle, to say the least. These are conservative institutions, dominated by reactionary and often racist bureaucrats who cater to the most aristocratic layers of the working class. Nevertheless, the fight is necessary in order to win the support of the ranks and help in the process of kicking out this misleadership altogether.

At the same time, the cops, courts, politicians and press work hand-in-hand to deny real justice to Black people and perpetuate the system of exploitation and racism. We say openly and repeatedly that only socialist revolution, which overthrows the armed forces of the capitalist regime, can resolve capitalism's injustice and crimes. Victories can be won now, including a modicum of justice for Amadou Diallo, but only if the truly mass power of the New York City working class is tapped into and civil disobedience is transcended.

*Justice for Amadou Diallo!
General Strike Against Police Terror!
For Mass Armed Self-Defense!
Workers' Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!*

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Iran: Regime on the Brink?

by A. Holberg

Twenty years after the regime of Shah Reza Pahlavi was brought down, the reactionary clerical successors to Iranian state power now appear to face their own curtain call.

The anti-Shah revolution was one of the most mass-based in the 20th century; it saw immense independent working-class struggles and the creation of shoras (councils), institutions that posed the question of which class would rule the state. But the ideological and organizational capitulation of almost the entire Iranian left, the potential Marxist leadership, proved to be an important factor in allowing the clerics to hijack the revolution and drown it in blood. Now, the left faces another decisive test.

In July 1999 an upheaval shook the capital, Teheran, and other major Iranian cities. At first it was the university students who flooded onto the streets demanding changes in government policy. But after a short while they received support from other angry layers of the population. This upsurge was hardly the first of its kind in the recent past. But it was certainly the biggest since the bloody repression of an oppositional force mainly led by the then left-Islamist "Peoples Mojahedin" (PMOI) in 1981.

REFORMIST AND HARD-LINE FACTIONS

The student demonstrations started as a reaction to the shutting down of the daily *Salam*. But their protest soon turned toward becoming a more conscious uprising against the regime itself. *Salam* was a leading paper of the so-called "reformist faction" around the Islamic Republic's president, Mohammad Khatami. Its "crime" was to publish an article on the strategy of the secret service to force the media into line. It was shut down by the hard-line faction around the "revolution's spiritual leader," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – the clerical forces who dominate the government. The fact that the editor-in-chief, Mussawi Khoiniha, had been the leader of the students who occupied the U.S. Embassy, "the spy den," during the "heroic days of the revolution" in 1980 did not save the paper from the fury of the hierarchy.

The closure of *Salam* was not the first repressive measure taken by the hard-line faction against the reformist faction and the press close to it. But for the students in Teheran, it was the last straw. They started with a totally peaceful demonstration; but this was immediately answered with brutal force by the Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran) and the Ansar-e Hezbollah. Four students were thrown out of dormitory windows and killed. In response, the demonstrations dramatically escalated. Support for the students came from growing numbers of people in Teheran and other cities. Hundreds of thousands came into the streets. At least at first they did not direct their wrath against the Islamic Republic and the whole autocratic regime, which is based upon the "velayat-e faqih" (the rule of the religious leader). They supported the reform-minded president, Khatami, and appealed to him for help.

Khatami has been a leading figure in the regime for many years. During the 1980's he was a stalwart representative of the "line of the Imam," Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini had been voted into office in 1979 by a crushing majority of the electorate because he promised the masses an end to imperialist ties and a better life, in place of the grinding exploitation and repression that characterized the

Shah's rule. But with the Khomeini regime came almost two decades of broken economic promises, pseudo-democracy, bloody war – and an equally bloody repression at the hands of the Pasdaran, the police, the judicial authorities and the various extra-judicial club-wielding gangs operating under the name of the Ansar-e Hezbollah.

It must be stressed that the reformist faction within governmental and clerical circles developed in response to the gradual but growing rejection of the cultural and political values embodied in the Islamic Republic by significant sections – perhaps even a majority – of the masses. This tidal change forced a section of the clergy to advocate reforms in order to maintain the dominance of the Islamic regime as a whole; its most outspoken representative was Khatami. One of the many signs of the change in mass consciousness is the attitude toward Arabic. The regime strongly supported education in the language of the Koran, and worked hard to exterminate pre-Islamic Iranian culture. Nevertheless, over time the number of people studying Arabic has dramatically decreased, while the numbers who give their children pre-Islamic names have increased. There are probably few Muslim countries these days where the political ideology of Islam is as unpopular as in Iran.

It was not Khatami and his allies who took the lead in fighting for democracy and reforms. But they knew that they had to appease the masses if they were to head off an angry and uncontrollable explosion. The main differences between the two factions have concerned culture and politics in a narrow sense. In order to allow safety valves for the mass pressure, the Khatami faction favored allowing more looseness in both fields.

On the other hand, the Khamenei faction is linked to various religious foundations formed after the revolution which control profitable private institutions taken away from Pahlavi's crew. It controls the repressive apparatus, the judiciary, the Parliament (Majlis) and the decisive Guardian Council, which sees to it that all governmental laws are in accordance with its interpretation of Islamic law. This faction senses that giving into the masses by allowing even formal democracy would be the first step in the demise of the regime. It tries to maintain clerical rule by using "anti-imperialist" rhetoric, but it is increasingly forced to defend its theocratic regime by repression.

REGIME ON THE BRINK

Both factions are aware that the regime is hurtling toward collapse. Everybody agrees that the economy is in shambles. Certainly the masses are worse off than under the Shah. The independent "Islamic economy" has proven to be a mirage. Iran could not break with the imperialist world market after the 1979 revolution because it did not break with capitalism. Nationalist rhetoric to the contrary, no bourgeois nation can develop independently in this epoch of imperialism.

The internal situation of the regime and its contradictory economic policies have accelerated its instability. Its social links to traditional sectors like the bazaar bourgeoisie and the rampant corruption of its expanded bureaucracy have only added more havoc. The country is still totally dependent upon the export of oil and gas. Foreign debt now amounts to more than \$10 billion; since the time of the Shah, the ex-

change rate of the national currency, the rial, has fallen by a factor of 100. Unemployment is probably around 20 percent; wages keep constantly falling behind prices. Inflation, according to the *Economist*, has reached about 40 percent. The 2 percent economic growth for this year will clearly fall far short of the originally announced 5 percent.

While the Khatami faction wanted to edge toward dropping most of the anti-imperialist demagoguery and open up Iran to foreign capital investment, the Khamenei faction feared that would mean losing cultural and political control. However, both clerical forces have basically agreed on the need to privatize state-owned industries.

Anti-imperialist rhetoric is vital to maintain the regime's faltering grip on the masses and to bind the clerics together against a common enemy. Yet since the economy is trapped by the imperialist world market, under either faction the regime will have to take major steps toward the economic changes demanded by the imperialists. That would mean that the state will have to redouble its attack on the workers' and peasants' already depressed standard of living. The regime will then face an even greater crisis.

KHATAMI SHIFTS RIGHTWARD

There is one point not to be overlooked. Though the Islamic regime is highly repressive, it has never been able to ignore the masses. The popular revolution of 1979 mobilized large layers of toilers, who had not been allowed to play a role in politics before. The clerics were forced to permit these masses to have some say in governmental affairs, while at the same time they were trying to preserve their autocratic theocracy. Thus, the Islamic rulers maintained a regime flawed by a major contradiction. That is why it combines bloody repression with an enforced, albeit limited, tolerance for elections and fierce debate in the Majlis and the press.

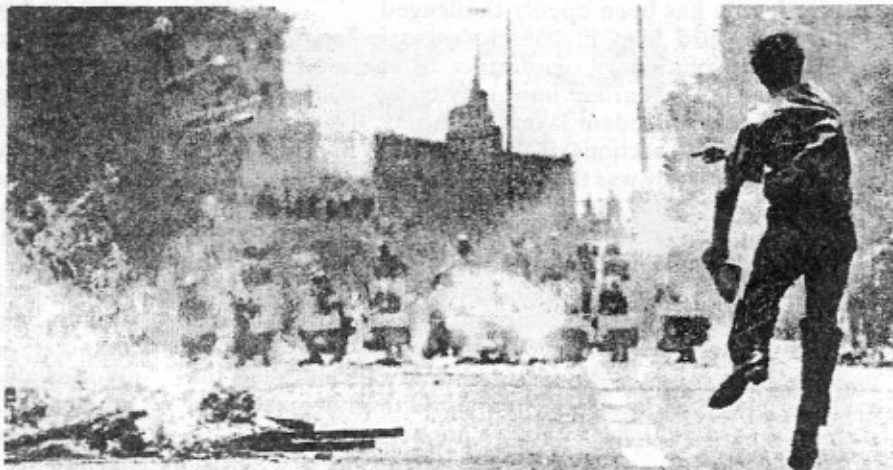
It had been obvious for some time that Khatami had not put an end to either the economic crisis or repression. However, as the student uprising developed, it became clear to growing numbers of people that there was no use in pinning any hopes on him for a future democratization. When the students confronted the regime directly, he rallied to the side of the autocratic faction and denounced the student "troublemakers." During the six days that shook Iran, this growing disillusionment with Khatami was a chief reason as to why the slogans of the demonstrators became more and more radical - even to the point of openly questioning the legitimacy of the regime.

Some steps had been taken to appease the students, such as firing the chief of the Teheran police because of the provocative way he had dealt with the first protests. But at the same time, the regime took an even more confrontational position, warning the students not to dare more demonstrations. And the number of students arrested was still not revealed. On September 12, the official *Jomhouri-ye Eslami* carried the announcement made by Gholamhossein Rahbarpur, the President of the Teheran Revolutionary Court, that four of the students arrested in July were sentenced to death. (In December, two more were similarly sentenced.)

Since September, given the approaching parliamentary elections as well as the continuing student unrest, Khatami has tacked and veered in his attitude toward the demonstra-

tions. Steadfast in his opposition to anything even approaching violence by the students, at times, he has claimed to understand the reasons for the protests. While it appears that his faction had nothing to do with the sentences of execution, he hasn't publicly opposed them.

In the wake of the student uprisings, the reform coalition around Khatami has split in all but name. What seems to be happening is that even the students who learned the ugly truth about Khatami's reformist facade still hope that he will provide a counterweight to the reactionary clerics around Khamenei. However, Khatami and his allies seem to have actually moved closer to Khamenei. The theocracy has intensified repression not only against the students and the



Teheran: Iranian police and fundamentalist allies murdered and maimed student protesters in July.

popular movement but also against relatively liberal papers and important leaders of the former Khatami-led coalition.

The most notorious case was the trial and imprisonment of former interior minister, Abdollah Nouri, the most popular reform cleric. Nouri and his circle are more steadfast advocates of democratic reform as a means of preserving Islamic rule than is Khatami. He was convicted because he otherwise would have won a huge popular vote in the February parliamentary elections and was destined to become speaker of the Majlis.

Nouri's newspaper *Khordad* was also banned, but like other banned papers it has been resurrected under a new name. The Khatami faction controls the ministry of culture which permits such leeway, even though in this case Khatami gave tacit support to the conviction. Now, given the impossible economic and political situation threatening the regime, it may be that Khamenei himself has had to put a little distance between himself and the more hidebound reactionaries clustered in the hierarchy. In recent days, he has been attempting to appear a bit more neutral in the factional struggles among the mullahs. It is unclear as to whether this is a tactical ploy by the hard-liners as a whole or a real, if very modest, overture to the reformers. He has inched further in the direction of limited reform while maintaining the repression vital to the regime's survival.

Khatami, frightened by the student harbinger of impending revolt, has in turn moved toward Khamenei. Khamenei and the more moderate Khatami wing of the reform camp seem to have agreed on making former president Hashemi Rafsanjani, a moderate cleric and a ruthlessly pragmatic politician, the new Majlis speaker. Again it must be

stressed that the various factions are fighting not about whether to keep the Islamist regime in place, but over how to ensure its continuance.

PROTESTS RESUME

Seeing no apparent alternative, the student movement has also fractured again. Many have obviously been scared by the repression and are still hoping an electoral victory by the pro-Khatami parliamentarians will soften the repression. Nevertheless, by mid-December thousands of students had resumed demonstrating. Violent confrontations and armed attacks have already broken out in Tehran and other major cities. And for the first time, the legitimacy of Khamenei's theocratic rule has been openly challenged.

This forward leap in consciousness is freighted with potentially revolutionary significance of enormous proportions. Though the earlier university-based upheavals had broadened to non-student layers of society, this process did not reach decisive sections of the proletariat and peasantry. One reason certainly was the lack of time: the movement was suppressed after only six days. Another critical factor was that the student leaders did not see from the start the need to involve the masses. Their political horizon was limited to good but narrow bourgeois-democratic demands. The workers, concerned about daily survival, were understandably cautious about joining in, since the student movement didn't project real answers to their horrendous conditions. If the students had radicalized and generalized their demands and slogans, they could have won over greater numbers.

REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' PARTY NEEDED

History has demonstrated many times that a student-led struggle, even when it enlists the support of the working class, cannot achieve the fundamental change the Iranian people desperately need. The only effective answer is a socialist revolution led by the workers, organized into their own communist vanguard party. With such a proletarian leadership, the democratic aspirations of the now-confused students and the needs of other toilers could be accomplished. The "reformist" wing of the regime itself recognizes the power of the oil workers and the rest of the working class: it has formed an electoral "Islamic Labor Party" to detour their threat.

Tragically, there is no revolutionary workers' party now functioning in Iran. The various traditional organizations of the Iranian left, now in exile, today have little or no direct influence inside the country. The PMOI was the only opposition organization which seemed to have had some influence, but they have lost even the vestige of leftist pretensions. Their clout has sharply diminished ever since the Iran-Iraq war, given their reliance upon support from Saddam Hussein.

A key arena for building the Iranian revolutionary party is the struggle of the independent workers' organizations, grassroots institutions which have sprung up illegally in the last few years. They are not yet nationally unified but have been instrumental in many demonstrations and strikes all over the country, as well as in efforts to set up independent unions. Their 1999 May Day demonstrations proved that they are clearly anti-regime. However, given the past capitulations by what passed for a Marxist left, they have embraced a syndicalist outlook.

It is vital that revolutionary socialists intervene to help clarify the road ahead, which among other things means winning the workers' organizations over to communism and

the need to seize political power. If this task is not accomplished, the regime will stagger from crisis to crisis, always escalating its oppression and exploitation. Without a proletarian vanguard, the masses will not be able to rid themselves of their parasitical religious rulers.

Serious and lasting democratic reforms are incompatible with a continuation of capitalist rule in Iran. The perspective of permanent revolution outlined by Leon Trotsky is the only solution. Democracy in Iran can only be achieved through a successful socialist revolution, a revolution which could spread rapidly throughout the Middle East.

The theory of permanent revolution originally pointed to the need for the socialist seizure of power in the less advanced countries, as the only means of destroying the pre-capitalist barriers to the masses' democratic demands. Even though those demands were products of the bourgeois revolutions, the capitalists had become too frightened of the modern, powerful proletariat to favor radical democratic acts, land seizures, and the like. As capitalism's epoch of imperialism and decay deepened, Trotsky recognized that capitalism itself was now the *chief* barrier to democratic rights. This is certainly the case in Iran.

In this time of crisis, it is of the utmost importance that the international working class gives all the help it can to the Iranian masses in their fight against the capitalist Islamic autocracy – no matter which political faction acts as its agent. Worldwide protests, launched by the Iranian left, must be wholeheartedly supported. Iran is of great strategic importance for both imperialism and the socialist revolution. The Iranian masses and the working class in particular lost the first battle when the capitalist dictatorship of the Shah was replaced by the no less capitalist dictatorship of the ayatollahs. But the working class that only twenty years ago rose up in revolution still has a fighting legacy. The necessity is for immediate solidarity with the resurgent Iranian struggle, coupled with a reinvigorated effort to aid comrades who fight to re-create an authentic proletarian revolutionary party.

The anti-imperialist revolution which swept the "third world" after World War II was led and betrayed by secular middle-class nationalists under the banner of Stalinism or "all-class" pseudo-socialism. In disgust and desperation, significant sectors of the superexploited and oppressed in Iran and elsewhere turned to fundamentalist clerics, who cast their utopian nationalist promises in religious "anti-imperialist" forms. Now, as their treason also becomes clearer each day to the masses, it is the duty of every communist to fight for the re-creation of the authentic Trotskyist Fourth International, the proletarian internationalist party which champions the hopes and aspirations of masses afflicted by imperialism in every corner of the world. A revolutionary party in Iran must be armed with the strategy of permanent revolution. Only the working class, led by its own vanguard, can point the way out of the misery created by this inhuman system. ●

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New York: Why the Klan Wasn't Smashed

by Jeff Covington

While many on the left cheered the big October 23 demonstration against the Ku Klux Klan in New York as an unqualified triumph, we say: tell no lies, claim no easy victories.

On the positive side, it was a militant interracial mobilization of 8,000 to 10,000 people united against a common enemy for the first time in many years. The protestors showed widespread disrespect for Democratic Party politicians who tried to keep them pacified throughout. Several anti-Klan fighters managed to land a few blows against one Klan leader. And only a pathetic group of 16 or 17 KKKers showed up. But the fact that these advocates of racist terror were not driven from the streets and given a beating – in a city with a huge number of Black and Latino workers – means that the anti-Klan victory was at best minimal.

The huge mobilization of police to protect the Klan was the most obvious reason why the Klan was not dealt a smashing blow. But the police could never have succeeded in saving the KKKers' skins were it not for the passive and divisive role played by the liberal Democratic politicians, as well as that of the sectarian and opportunist groups on the left. Had the major trade unions and the Black and Latino organizations mobilized to run the Klan out of town, the result could have been far different. Even though a few prominent Black and union leaders talked big beforehand, organizations like the NAACP and the Nation of Islam did nothing. Thus the opportunity for a far stronger mobilization against the Klan was missed.

It also must not be overlooked that the Klan rally was kept so quiet and tiny by the actions of New York's racist Mayor Giuliani, who succeeded in obtaining injunctions that prevented the Klan's use of a sound system and hoods. Since the Klansmen couldn't hide their faces, only a handful turned up. If the anti-Klan protesters had faced a hundred KKKers blaring their amplified racist crap and still been prevented from breaking up their rally, then the anti-Klan side could not have claimed any victory at all.

Nevertheless, Giuliani's injunctions were not in the interest of those who wanted to fight the Klan. Bans on marches and masks will be used much more heavily against the working class and oppressed people. The working-class answer is mass mobilization to smash the Klan.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY POLS PUSH "FREE SPEECH"

Giuliani's moves to ban the Klan immediately opened a division between those who said they want to stop the Klan and liberals who think the Klan have a legitimate right to spread their murderous message. The Partisan Defense Committee (PDC), a front group of the Spartacist League, announced their intention to hold a counter-demonstration under the banner "Stop the KKK!" We in the League for the Revolutionary Party joined with many others in endorsing this call. An LRP supporter introduced a motion for union support in the Guild Delegate Assembly of the 1199 Hospital Workers Union, and the motion passed unanimously. But this broad working-class sentiment was betrayed by union head Dennis Rivera, who didn't lift a finger to mobilize anyone.

Meanwhile, the liberals chose to oppose Giuliani by defending the KKK's First Amendment right to free speech – ignoring the reality that Ku Klux Klan rallies are not about

speech but about organizing for racist terror. Under the rubric of the Ad-hoc Citywide Coalition to Stop the Klan, various Democratic politicians, along with the Latino Officers Association, called for a mass protest to drown out the Klan with noise but not actually stop their rally. The most influential figure involved was former mayoral candidate Rev. Al Sharpton, accompanied by lesser-known people like State Assemblyman Scott Stringer.

The liberals' method of building for their rally undermined the potential power of mass protest at every turn.



Challenging Giuliani's ban, the New York Civil Liberties Union, Sharpton's National Action Network and the Black newspaper, the *Amsterdam News*, petitioned in court in defense of the KKK's "right." As we warned in our leaflet:

You better believe that bans will be used far more against Blacks and the working class than against right-wingers. But arguing for the Klan's "right" to march is also bogus. ... You can bet the KKK won't be attacked the way the Million Youth March was in 1998, for example. You can also bet the cops won't crack the heads of the KKK the way they do whenever a working class demonstration or strike gets "out of hand." (Copies of our leaflet are available on request.)

The liberals also called for massive police protection for the Klan rather than for mass action to stop them. Led by Norman Siegel of the NYCLU, they went so far as to offer to share a platform and sound system with the KKK! This obscene deal was accepted by the courts at first, but was overturned on Giuliani's appeal.

When the anti-Klan rally began, thousands of people arrived obviously hostile to the Klan but unclear what to do.

At first many listened politely but without much enthusiasm to speeches from the podium by an assortment of Democrats and liberals. Other figures with more militant reputations echoed the mainstream view. Rev. Herbert Daughtry said of the Klan, "I may not agree with what you say but I will defend your right to say it." Minister Conrad Muhammad of the Million Youth March declared, "Yes, I defend their right to march, but we have to let them know they are not welcome here in New York City." (*Amsterdam News*, Oct. 28.)

IMPORTANCE OF FIGHTING THE KLAN

Against the liberals, we argued that a life-and-death issue was at stake: an open street demonstration by the KKK is a call for racist terror. The working class has to prevent such rallies from happening. Our leaflet said:

The Klan has chosen New York as their rally site exactly to test their strength in a city which is home to a large population of Blacks, Latinos, and immigrants, and a powerful working class at large. If they can pull off a rally here, imagine what they'll think they can get away with elsewhere. . . . The Klan and associated groups are getting stronger in such states as Pennsylvania and Indiana - as well as their traditional Southern stronghold. We can't let them get any stronger anywhere. Combating the Klan, preventing them from spreading their message, and thereby also demoralizing their current members is possible - but only through militant action.

The question was not whether the Klan was popular in New York City. It isn't, although there is support for it - especially among cops, prison guards and other bastions of reaction. But if the Klan could get away with rallying here, that would help them win recruits and act more boldly elsewhere. It was no accident that a number of people we spoke to at the rally recounted experiences that their families had been through, not so long ago, with the Klan down South.

Further, the anti-Klan rally had an even greater potential. For the KKK and other fascist groups are not the main enemy today. That is the capitalist state and its mainstream parties, Democrats as much as Republicans. As our leaflet warned:

"Democratic" capitalism is the source of racist police brutality and an obscenely racist system of "justice" and incarceration. The "democratic" profit-making system is also the source of anti-worker cuts in social programs, anti-immigrant attacks and murderous wars against the peoples of the world from Serbia to Puerto Rico to Iraq.

A mass action against the Klan had the potential to win a solid victory not only against those scum but also against the capitalist politicians and cops who perpetrate racism and attacks on workers every day, and who inevitably work together against all of us to protect the fascists. If the protestors had actually succeeded in getting at the Klan, which would have meant getting through the barrier of cops, that would have been a tremendous boost to the entire struggle against the cops and racist attacks in New York.

PREPARATION FOR THE COPS

The slogan "Stop the Klan!", under which the PDC had initiated its call, was necessary but not sufficient to prepare demonstrators for an actual confrontation. It was of course not a matter of giving out detailed battle plans but of presenting an understanding of the role of the police. This was not what was done in the PDC's October 19th press release, which quoted PDC counsel Rachel Wolkenstein as follows:

"The Partisan Defense Committee does not call on Mayor Giuliani to ban the Ku Klux Klan demonstration. We are for the people of New York, the working people, to come out and stop the Klan. What we want to do is organize a mass demonstration here, that by its size, by its multi-racial character, by the strength of its numbers and who it represents will make it clear to the Ku Klux Klan that it doesn't want to show its face. That's what we mean by stopping the Klan. This has happened before, and it will happen again here in New York. We do not want any confrontations with the police, and we don't want any impotent, liberal wailing over how bad the Klan is. We want a show of force by the working people of this city, by immigrants, by minorities that makes it clear that the Klan is not welcome, that the Klan will be stopped."

It is one thing to say that it would be great if numbers and unity scared the Klan into retreating. It is another to not even deal with the obvious: that the KKK would be heavily protected by the police, and would only be "stopped" by a fighting effort that would have to defend itself against the cops. Here's what our leaflet said on the subject:

As they have done in the past, the cops will aim to keep us under their control and far from the fascists whom they aim to protect. In city after city, every time the fascists rear their ugly heads, the cops are there with their guns and batons turned against us. . . .

The misleadership of today's anti-Klan rally . . . can't be allowed to hand over the rally site to the Klan. A confrontation between the working class and oppressed on one side and the police and the Klan on the other is the last thing they want. Yet it is absolutely necessary. It can only happen by convincing the ranks of both anti-Klan rallies.

Many of the anti-Klan protesters arrived at the rally with no clear intention of trying to smash the Klan. Nevertheless, our agitation and our leaflet in favor of doing this received a warm reception. More importantly, the appearance of the Klan enraged the crowd and made clear to many protesters what they hadn't recognized before: that they wanted to smash the Klan!

OPPORTUNITY FOR LEFT LEADERSHIP

Intent on protecting the Klan and making a show of force themselves, the NYPD divided the crowd into several sections with concrete barriers and plenty of cops between them to prevent any united militant action. The closest section was kept 50 yards away from the Klan location by a wall of police. This physical constriction made the crowd even angrier. When LRPers initiated the chant "Cops and Klan Go Hand in Hand" in the front section, it was taken up by almost everyone in our vicinity. Others led this and similar chants in other sections.

We joined with others in demanding that the platform speakers defend the protesters against the police tactics. Even those who hadn't lent much of an ear to the liberal speeches could see for themselves that the Democrats on the podium had no problem with the cops' set-up. It would have been far more embarrassing for "militants" like Sharpton or Rivera to have to choose between the cops and the crowd. No wonder these two "leaders" never showed their faces!

When the Klan members appeared, protestors continually tried to surge forward, ignoring the podium and chanting "Smash the Klan!" - far louder than the politicians' speeches, sound system and all. The Dems and friends ig-

nored the will of their audience and went on with one sappy speech after another. Throughout several struggles with the police right under their nose, the liberals on stage ignored the conflict and rambled on.

October 23 provided a great opportunity for the self-proclaimed revolutionary groups to demonstrate their alternative leadership in action. Even though communists are not widely popular in the U.S. in these times, this was a specific situation where the vacuous efforts by the pro-capitalist liberals left the leadership of the anti-Klan crowd wide open. Despite their best efforts to control the demonstration, the liberals were facing an angry, spirited crowd looking, quite literally, for a way to get at the Klan and who ignored the podium once the Klan arrived. It was the massive police presence alone that was saving the Klansmen's hides, and everyone there could see that. But in the end, most of the left organizations with the size to affect the day's action distinguished themselves only by doing harm to the struggle.

The principled course of action would have been to prepare in advance and consistently campaign for the unity of all interested groups and forces in action against the Klan. Had the left from the start counterposed an action policy to stop the Klan, against the liberals' reliance on the cops to keep order, they would have had a widely popular issue and the numbers to lead the whole crowd in a successful action. But a united effort was ruled out from the start, due to the typical combination of sectarianism and opportunism that characterizes the centrist left.

FAKE SOCIALIST SPEECH

The International Socialist Organization (ISO) was a chief culprit. They played a leading role in the main rally at Foley Square. They had capitulated to the liberals from day one, endorsing and working uncritically inside the Democratic-led coalition that stood for allowing the Klan to rally, and they had used slogans in their material similar to the liberals'. When they got to the demo, they behaved as if they were on their own planet. Their contingent mostly gathered in circles and preached to their own choir about how bad the Klan was, how the Klan wanted to scapegoat Blacks, Latinos, gays and so forth. Well, who there thought differently? Their phony pep rallies featured lame and non-confrontational slogans like "KKK, Go Away, Anti-Racists Here to Stay." This wasn't just cheerleading, it was really bad cheerleading.

The LRP and others had tried to get ISOers to join us in chanting to break down the barriers between sections from early on. At a critical juncture, when the protesters' demand to remove the internal barricades and unite the demo was at its peak, with chants of "Open the Gates!" and "One Demo!" ringing throughout the crowd in both sections, an ISO speaker on the stage, Johanna Fernandez, actually had the microphone in her hands. With an opportunity to lead the crowd by agitating for a united demo, she ignored the

demands of the demonstrators (including a few of her own comrades, who were joining the calls to cut the crap and unite the demo!) – and also failed to criticize her fellow bigshots on the platform with her for their role. Instead, we were treated to a vague and abstract speech for socialism.

The practical, activist-minded ISO, extremely capable of submerging discussion of socialism when it suits them, this time used a "socialist" speech to avoid action. Giving the lead the protesters wanted would have meant openly challenging the Democrats and cops.

THE SPARTACIST SIDESHOW

While the behavior of the ISO was scandalous, it wasn't anything new for them. It was the Spartacist League and its Partisan Defense Committee (PDC) that betrayed the anti-Klan forces in the most stunning way, given the large effort they had put into organizing against the Klan and the even larger claims they made about their intentions and their role. The PDC took a militant posture, saying that it stood for confronting the Klan with the largest possible "labor/Black mobilization." It also claimed to be carrying out an authentically Trotskyist "united front" policy. For these reasons, their work deserves some detailed attention.

Originally the Klan had applied for a permit from the city for a rally at 100 Centre Street, the Criminal Court Building. The PDC immediately applied for a permit for a counter-demonstration at the same location. Then the Klan's rally site was moved to 60 Centre Street, two blocks away, at Foley Square. Extensive newspaper and television advance coverage in New York gave notice the KKK, if it showed up at all, would be at Foley Square from 2 to 4 p.m. The Spartacists did make a major effort to leaflet campuses and workplaces about their rally, but clearly the Klan's projected appearance drew thousands to the rival site.

While the Foley Square event led by the liberals attracted thousands, the PDC held its separate rally and drew about 400 to 500 people at peak; half of these were SL supporters, while most of the rest came from the organized left. There were delegations from Columbia and NYU, and a few local union officials who didn't bring many members; the largest union contingent was about a dozen transit workers from Local 100's New Directions opposition.

As in the main rally, the speakers droned on without giving a clue about what to do about the Klan – although here, in contrast, the speeches were verbally militant. Aside from the Spartacists and their front groups, few on the left were called on to speak. A few labor officials spoke; the only one of any significance was Charles Ensley, a leading DC 37 reformer and President of Social Workers Local 3171. Ensley said, "On behalf of the 58,000 of us I'll commit to you that we will be in the struggle until victory is ours." No Spartacist from the platform dared to challenge him about where the actual 58,000 workers were!

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.

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But the speeches were incidental. After 1 p.m., our comrades at the PDC rally found a great deal of sentiment for moving to the other site, where the action was likely to be; many people drifted there in small groups. The Spartacists excused the fact that their march was in the wrong place by claiming 1) that the cops, mayor, Democrats and Klan had evaded them by relocating the Klan; and 2) that the PDC rally would march to the Klan site when and if the Klan showed up.

However, at 1:30 p.m. PDC leader Gene Herson announced from the podium that "The Klan has not appeared; that's a victory for us." That was a bit premature, since the Klan was scheduled to arrive at 2 p.m. Thus they seriously



Sen. Charles Shumer (D-NY), like other liberals, showed up at demo for photo-op, not anti-Klan action.

disoriented protesters who counted on the PDC to lead a confrontation against the Klan. At 1:45 p.m., when the most militant section was chanting "Let's march!" – meaning "let's go over to where the Klan was" – the SLers at the podium responded with empty chants like "KKK, Not Today." It was at this point that they put the one Democratic Party politician they had landed, District Leader Carmen Quinones. They didn't criticize her politics from the podium any more than they had criticized the pro-Democratic labor hacks.

Throughout their sideshow, in fact, the PDC made no preparations to march to stop the Klan and failed to keep its audience informed of what was happening or what its plans were. In the end it was other left groups – above all the Progressive Labor Party (PLP), as well as the LRP and others – who led a split from the PDC rally and made the circuitous trip around police barricades to Foley Square and belatedly joined the much bigger crowd that had the possibility of confronting the Klan. The Spartacists were left talking mainly to themselves. Eventually they wandered over towards the Foley Square rally, but by that time they couldn't get close enough to affect the action going on.

PROGRESSIVE LABOR

Besides the ISO and the Spartacists, who had excellent opportunities to offer leadership from their microphones and podiums, the only left organizations with sizeable forces were the Workers World Party and the Progressive Labor Party. The WWP made no attempt at distinguishing itself or giving leadership. The PLP, on the other hand, played an active role, not their customary sectarian game. A typical PL "intervention" is to hold a physically separate anti-Klan rally and ignore any other rally that is happening at the same time. This is what they did, for example, in response to the ISO-led anti-Nazi rally in Washington, D.C. last August. (See the LRP report on page 2.)

First, PLP claimed credit for the three infiltrators who posed as Klan supporters to get into the KKK rally area, where they managed to rough up one of the Klan leaders before the cops dragged them away. That effort got a lot of attention in the next day's press. PLP also attended the PDC rally and triggered the breakaway to the main rally. But they had not made an effort at the PDC rally to build support in advance for the move. More importantly, they hadn't sent people to talk to the much larger numbers at Foley Square from the start. Once they did get there, the Klan was already halfway through their show. A few PLers did make some attempt to egg on the crowd to action.

PLP did a better job on October 23 than what we have seen before. A militant attitude is important in fighting the Klan and dealing with the police. But it is not enough. PLP as a rule opposes the notion of united actions against fascism; that they made even a partial intervention into the crowd at the PDC rally was unusual. And the problems with PL's politics go far deeper. As we have explained, this Stalinist organization propagates a sectarian, un-Marxist and frankly nonsensical misunderstanding of fascism, in which Clinton, the National Organization for Women and the Teamsters union are all fascist! (See our article in PR 57.)

FAILURE TO FIGHT FOR UNITY

What could have been done to really stop the Klan? Both in advance and on October 23, the concrete problem facing revolutionaries was how to build an event that would be motivated and powerful enough – as well as in the right place! – to stop the Klan. This required winning the mass base of people away from the liberals: a problem of forging a united action between those who would turn out in response to the PDC efforts and the inevitably greater number who would turn out where the Klan actually was scheduled to be.

Concretely, it was necessary to warn that the Democrats would cooperate with the police in trying to prevent a confrontation between the anti-racists and the Klan; and to work ahead of time to forge a defense plan to meet that situation. One thing that the PDC could have done was to call for voluntary defense marshals who agreed with the idea of united action to meet in advance to form a coordinating body between the two demos. A plan for united action could well have retained the use of the Criminal Court Building area as a launching pad for a militant march to the main rally. Whatever the tactic, it was necessary above all to get the most militant and conscious forces to Foley Square in time to lead the crowd there.

Nothing of the sort was done by the PDC/SL. That was not because of a lack of cadre: the Spartacists brought many supporters into New York from other areas to build for the

day. But they completely ignored the need to unify the participants in the two demonstrations. The PDC did intervene at one small meeting of the Ad-hoc Coalition, mainly to demand that the larger coalition endorse the PDC rally.

In an October 19th press statement the PDC described its one attempt at unity:

In his repugnant defense of the Ku Klux Klan, New York Civil Liberties Union head Norm Siegel is acting in collusion with the city administration and the KKK against the PDC and the many thousands of working people who intend to stop the Klan. ... Gene Herson [the PDC's labor coordinator] said at today's press conference: "We want to make it clear that the Partisan Defense Committee-initiated demonstration is broad, it is open to anybody who agrees with the simple slogan 'All Out to Stop the KKK on October 23.'" Noting that the PDC had contacted Stringer on several occasions, Herson continued: "We want to see a coordinated mobilization here, however he has informed us that his protest is being coordinated by the lawyer for the Ku Klux Klan, NYCLU lawyer Norman Siegel."

Herson's excuse for the lack of unity made no sense. For one thing, Stringer and Siegel do not differ over the Klan's right to free speech - Stringer wasn't any less a candidate for unity because he was working with Siegel. In reality it would have made good sense to demand that Stringer, Sharpton, Rivera, Siegel et al endorse joint action - if only to prove that they would refuse and thus underscore the fact that the liberals were the barrier to unity. Second, the assertion that the PDC demo would be broad and open to everyone wasn't the point. Stringer's rally was also open to everyone who wanted to get in the Klan's face. (In fact he misleadingly used the slogan "Stop The Klan in NYC!") Wouldn't people who wanted to stop the Klan show up there despite the "free speech" garbage? Of course.

Further, as in this press release, the PDC repeatedly baited Sharpton, Stringer and Siegel for being in collusion with Giuliani and the Klan. This line was false and foolishly ineffective. Who would buy the line that Sharpton & Co., for all their rotten bourgeois politics, were pro-Giuliani - much less pro-Klan? In the same spirit, on the day of the rally, several PDCers were at Foley Square to try to convince protesters that the rally they were at was "pro-Klan" - the real anti-Klan action was two blocks away!

POLITICAL SPLIT ONLY AT THE TOP

Another way the SL avoided the task of building unity was to pretend that the PDC rally already had the masses behind it. In an October 17 press release, PDC lawyer Rachel Wolkenstein asserted:

Unions and union officials representing hundreds of thousands of workers in this city - including the Social Service Employees, Transport Workers and Local 1199 hospital workers, DC 37 and other AFSCME city workers - have endorsed the call for a massive labor/black mobilization to stop the Klan. Black, Hispanic and other community organizations have come on board as well as campus student governments and other student and youth groups. Organizing efforts on the streets have met with a resounding response from thousands of people in neighborhoods across the city.

If that were really true, why would anyone have to worry about a piddling liberal event at Foley Square?

In order to justify their own sectarianism, the SL/PDC

had argued that there was a political division between the two rallies - only the PDC rally was for action to stop the Klan. But this was a lie. The real political division existed only on the top; the PDC leaders and the liberal politicians did have different political programs. But *demonstrators* at both rallies did want to stop the Klan, exactly why an appropriate united front tactic was sorely needed. The PDC should have been preparing their followers to send all forces into the main demonstration in order to combat the liberals' misleadership and galvanize the whole crowd to confront the Klan.

The Spartacists, however, destroyed any notion of united action. They carried out a purposeful disinformation campaign. For the sake of boosting their own rally and tooting their own horn (see the adjacent article), they ended up building a sectarian barrier to united action.

THE WAY FORWARD

The demonstration exposed the Democratic Party pols who regularly hoist themselves to the front of protests. Their position on October 23 was not just a mistake about how to fight the Klan. It was an expression of their overall program, which is not to fight against the capitalist system and its myriad forms of oppression, but rather to run the system by trying to soften its cruelty and maintain social peace. Their defense of the Klan's rights, even though they lent their voices to an anti-Klan protest, expresses their program of opposing capitalism's worst injustices - but above all opposing any struggle that might threaten the system. In the same way, they restrain the fight against police brutality and all other mass struggles. Their leadership can only disarm the masses in the face of growing attacks, serve as a safety valve for their anger and provide our oppressors with the opportunity to prepare ever greater attacks.

On the left, the ISO distinguished itself by doing the most energetically opportunist cheerleading for the Democratic Party line; while the Spartacists divided the action on the basis of lies. In the aftermath, the ISO, SL, PL, WWP and other groups all sang in unison, hailing the outcome as a substantial and unqualified victory. As we have noted, there were extremely positive aspects to the crowd's participation that day. But the left ignores the fact that the rally failed to achieve its potential of smashing the Klan. They avoid the hard truth that the Klan rally would have been more powerful had Giuliani not succeeded in limiting it. Indeed, they completely ignore the fact that Giuliani and his courts and cops succeeded in showing all "who's the boss" by successfully attacking both the Klan and the anti-Klan rally.

As for our own organization, we fought for a united mass struggle and distributed several thousand leaflets that were very well received; we participated in both demonstrations, particularly in the mass effort at the barricades, and agitated whenever possible to stop the Klan. At the PDC rally, we were misled by the Spartacists' assurances that they were out to stop the Klan and that the Klan wasn't showing. We didn't realize until too late that the PDC had no intention of marching en masse over to Foley Square.

But overall, our tactical approach was correct. Our problem was that we did not have the size to decisively influence the event. From this experience the LRP has reconfirmed our need to vigorously make every effort to expand our numbers. We need to build an authentic revolutionary party leadership for such struggles in the future. Join us! ●

Workers Vanguard's Fabrications

by Amy Stern

As if the Spartacists' sectarian sideshow at the anti-Klan rally wasn't enough, their subsequent accounts entered the realm of pure fiction.

Workers Vanguard gave the PDC sole credit for the thousands who turned out, even though on the scene the Spartacists had denounced the main anti-Klan rally as "pro-Klan." They claimed it was their mobilization that forced the KKKers to shut themselves down halfway through, while in fact they had kept themselves safely two blocks away throughout the pushing and shoving with the cops. And they hailed the whole affair as a triumph of, whereas in reality the unions were distinguished chiefly by their failure to appear. Their October 29 headline, "Labor/Black Mobilization Rides KKK Out of NYC," was true only in their wildest dreams.

These inventions are so gross, and there were so many witnesses to what actually happened, that there is little need to say more. (Of course, this is hardly the first time *WV* has lied; see "The Spartacist School of Falsification," in *PR* 55.) But the lies, half-lies and mere whoppers are so interwoven with sectarian confusionism on the method of the united front and how communists intervene in struggles that a serious treatment of their political game-playing is called for.

THE POWER OF LABOR?

As our main article points out, the Spartacists puffed themselves up so they could claim theirs was the main event with serious labor backing. *Workers Vanguard's* attempt to explain their low labor turnout, after the fact, was feeble:

Many unions told us that they couldn't endorse the PDC mobilization because their leadership was split over the question. Nonetheless, a number that didn't endorse asked for stacks of the PDC's mobilizing leaflet to put in their union halls. Dennis Rivera, who runs a well-oiled machine in Local 1199, made no overt attempt to mobilize his membership behind Stringer's "free speech" diversion. Likewise, the hidebound craft-union bureaucrats at the head of the Central Labor Council who endorsed Stringer's "demonstration of tolerance" did not put out the word that trade unionists should stay away from the labor/black mobilization.

How's that? The fact that big labor did not actively sabotage the PDC rally proves that it was a labor rally? Rivera's betrayal of his promise to mobilize against the Klan shows that he favored the Democrat-led rally no more than the PDC's? The Spartacists' logic is pathetic.

For all its puffery, *WV* doesn't bother to reveal the names of the "many unions" whose poor hands were so tied that they couldn't mobilize. Instead, it glorifies those union hacks who did put in an appearance:

These unionists, who knew that coming to a mobilization to stop the Klan was serious business, were above all what gave the mobilization its disciplined and determined character. They acted as marshals to protect the mobilization at 100 Centre Street. In the vanguard was SSEU Local 371, led by its president, Charles Ensley, whose members stationed themselves right in front of the speaker's platform and then led a large contingent from 100 Centre Street to Foley Square a block away, where thousands of others had drifted in the hope of getting closer to the Klan. A thousand edgy cops, with many more in reserve,

were restrained by this show of labor power. . . . For hundreds of students, this was not only their first taste of mass political action, but their first sense of the social power of labor organized in racially integrated unions.

What contempt for workers and youth! A token assemblage of a few unionists is equated with the mass power of the working class. A union hack who brings along four or five associates is acclaimed as the leader of "the vanguard." A thousand armed cops are restrained by "this show of labor power." And the marshals at 100 Centre Street are hailed for protecting a demonstration that was never under assault – while militants at 60 Centre Street were constantly being pushed back and forth by cops, with a small number arrested. That's where the mighty SSEU militia was needed!

WV celebrates the paltry union participation at the PDC rally – even while forced to admit it lacked major union endorsers, never mind participation. Ensley aside, the big union names the PDC listed as endorsers – Larry Adams of the Mail Handlers, Arthur Cheliotis of CWA Local 1180 – neither showed nor sent members. This was no labor rally. (Another point *WV* somehow fails to mention is that Ensley is tied to the "reform" group of oppositional bureaucrats in DC 37, whose main strategy so far has been to take the union to court to clean it up.)

WHO STOPPED THE KLAN?

Some of its lies were so flagrant that *Workers Vanguard* had to change its story. The October 29 issue gives this account of how the Klan was "stopped":

Able to show their faces only under the protection of an army of cops, 17 Klansmen cowered outside the New York State Supreme Court, surrounded on all sides by at least 8,000 determined anti-Klan protesters. . . . As these hooded-and-robed racists scurried back into the courthouse under police escort barely midway through their scheduled rally, the trade unionists and others assembled under the PDC "Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the KKK!" banner broke into nonstop chanting: "We stopped the Klan! We stopped the Klan!"

That is, the fact that the PDC paraders chanted that they had stopped the Klan is presented as proof that they actually did so – the only "proof" they could possibly come up with, since no such thing happened.

This first account creatively wove together their description of their rally with the fact that the Klan was overwhelmed – without even mentioning that there were two separate rallies! The only hint of the far larger rally that actually confronted the Klan was the admission that "thousands of others" had "drifted" to Foley Square "in the hope of getting closer to the Klan." Of course, those thousands had gone there on purpose in the hopes of getting at the KKK, a task from which the Spartacists abstained.

The next issue (November 12) gave up on the "drifted" alibi and came up with this explanation:

The Democrats called for a demonstration of "tolerance" and planned to share a sound permit with the KKK. As it turned out, this diversion wasn't taken seriously by anyone except the ISO, which was the main group which actively built for it. . . . But the crowd that accidentally ended up at that site had been mobilized around the PDC call to stop the KKK.

Yeah, "accidentally" the crowd showed up exactly at the "pro-Klan" rally the PDC urged them to stay away from.

Trying to both justify their separate rally and show off their military savvy, the Spartacists accuse the ISO of steering unknowing victims into the 100 Centre Street location, "which was a police trap." Of course, given the mass protest, it was correct to join the fight to break through the various divisive barricades, as many (including the LRP) repeatedly did in all the sections. Steering clear of the "police trap" would have meant, like the Spartacists, abandoning the masses at the site and surrendering any possibility of getting to the Klan. The problem with the ISO was not that it was at the wrong place but that it didn't fight to confront the Klan.

Similarly, *WV* denounced the PLP for splitting from the PDC rally: "In fact, what PL did was 'lead' itself straight into a line of riot cops a short distance away." The problem with the PLP split, and with ours as well, was not that we ran into the cops (for we soon found a back route to Foley Square) – but that it came too late, thanks to the PDC's misinformation. Had the PDC itself organized the march, the PLP and others wouldn't have been marching up the wrong street.

BLOC WITH LATINO COPS?

The Spartacists' potshot at the ISO cited above gives them too much credit, for it was hardly the ISO that built a rally publicized for days in advance in the mass media. Another attack on the ISO is politically wrong:

One group that did rally for the Democratic Party was the Latino Officers Association [LOA], a police group whose banner the ISO spoke in front of.

It is not unprincipled to stand on the same podium as Latino officers at an anti-fascist protest. The point is to denounce the cops and their pro-capitalist and pro-Klan role from that podium, so that the protesters draw the right lesson. *This* is what the ISO deserves to be criticized for.

By the same token, however, the PDC's rallies often feature Democratic politicians – again, this alone is no automatic evil. But the Spartacists don't criticize the Democrats on their podiums any more than the ISO criticizes reform-minded cops on theirs.

WV's implication that the LOA should have been excluded from an anti-fascist event misrepresents the communist understanding of the united front against fascism. Temporary tactical blocs with cops have occurred historically. An important example is Trotsky's advocacy of a bloc with Albert Grzesinsky, the police chief in Berlin in 1932. Trotsky wrote:

Last year I wrote that in the struggle against fascism the Communists were duty-bound to come to a practical agreement not only with the devil and his grandmother, but even with Grzesinsky. This sentence made its way through the entire Stalinist world press. Was better proof needed of the "social fascism" of the Left Opposition? Many comrades had warned me in advance: "They are going to seize on this phrase." I answered them, "It has been written so they will seize on it. Just let them seize upon this hot iron and burn their fingers. The blockheads must get their lesson." ("The Only Road," in *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, pp. 288-9.)

Only a blockhead would deny that all Latinos, including Latino cops, are among the intended victims of fascism's genocidal program; therein lies the basis for the LOA's opposition to the Klan. And only a sectarian would insist as a matter of principle that no bloc can be made with the LOA to stop the Klan. The task for communists was to challenge

the LOA to break from the police force if they were serious about fighting the Klan, given that the job of the cops is to protect the Klan, not the protesters – and that there is a long history of police collusion with the Klan. In this way communists would show that we indeed stand for the greatest possible unity against the Klan, and that reform cop groups cannot be trusted to take our side against their "brothers in blue" when push comes to shove. Because the LOA as a group will inevitably side with the police, not the workers and oppressed, the bloc with them could only be temporary (as was the proposed bloc with Grzesinsky).

UNITED FRONT?

WV described the PDC rally as "a united-front mobilization, which allowed for the expression of many diverse political viewpoints by all those who shared a commitment to the urgent necessity to stop the KKK." A united front means unity of the working class in action, through agreement of its mass institutions and parties. The strategy was elaborated by the early Communist International and further developed by Trotsky, during the rise of fascism in Germany in the early 1930's. Indeed, the Spartacists cite Trotsky's writings on Germany as a precedent.

Trotsky taught that a working-class united front is the most effective way to fight fascism and other capitalist attacks – at the time when the workers are not united behind a mass revolutionary party but are still divided under different, mainly pro-capitalist, political leaderships. It provides a powerful way for the working class to unite in action without any prior pre-condition of political agreement among different forces. And in the process revolutionaries can expose those misleaderships who refused to carry forward the struggle in the best interest of the class, allowing petty sectarian differences to stand in the way of the necessary fightback.

In New York, however, there could be no real united front in Trotsky's sense, since the unions and other big organizations refused to mobilize against the Klan's challenge, and there was no mass workers' movement to force them to do so. The united-front *method* could have been used to unite the forces available – but the Spartacists did exactly the opposite. As we note in our main article, they used their political differences with the leadership of the bigger demo as an excuse to *not* fight for united action.

WORKERS VANGUARD IN FANTASYLAND

We have seen how *WV's* sectarianism led them to first deny and then justify the separation of their event from the real anti-Klan action. We have also seen how that sectarianism went hand-in-hand with opportunism: union leaders and Democratic pols who spoke at their rally were never criticized, while any political opponent at 60 Centre Street was tainted as "pro-Klan."

But in convincing themselves that they engineered a tremendous working-class victory, they seem to have reached a hallucinatory epiphany. The November 12 *Workers Vanguard* trumpeted on its front page about the supposed sea change in mass consciousness brought about by October 23:

While it is widely understood that Giuliani is the enemy of working people, prior to this rally many workers and black people would have regarded Democrats like Stringer and Sharpton as some kind of alternative. Many workers would have regarded Dennis Rivera, president of 1199/SEIU (health workers) as some form of progressive leaders. Many liberal students would have regarded the ISO as

some form of progressive organization. All of these actors are now exposed as enemies of the working class and of all the would-be targets of fascist terror.

Nonsense. Exposed to whom? Few workers cared about Stringer before, during or after. Sharpton, on the other hand, remains one of the most formidable bourgeois opponents, and for those of us interested in the cause of Black liberation in general, there is a sizable struggle ahead to expose him. Likewise, Dennis Rivera and even the ISO retain their "progressive" credentials among their particular audiences.

Sharpton could get away with his no-show at the anti-Klan rally because police brutality is still the central battle for Blacks and Latinos in New York; few see him as a traitor in this fight, much less an enemy, at this time. It will take far deeper struggles, and the honest intervention of revolutionaries, to patiently expose him over time. Exposing Sharpton

LRP/COFI

continued from page 2

to our message of uniting the working class in a fight for jobs for all and unconditional defense of immigrants' rights. (Our leaflet is available in English and Spanish.)

In the coming months we plan on participating in national demonstrations against the IMF and World Bank. Comrades have been attending planning meetings in D.C., Chicago and New York.

NEW YORK LRP

A great deal of the work of New York comrades is related in the articles on the transit struggle and the rally against the Klan. We have long been active in 1199; an LRP supporter recently raised a denunciation of President Dennis Rivera in the Guild Delegate Assembly for his failure to support the transit workers against the outrageous injunctions used to cripple their strike movement.

On the police brutality front, we attended a demonstration in Irvington, New Jersey in solidarity with Max Antoine, a Haitian immigrant who was savagely beaten by cops and subsequently arrested under false charges. A victory was won recently when charges against him were dropped, but he remains severely handicapped and is pursuing a struggle to expose the police attack on him. We also attended a recent protest against the change of venue of the trial of the four officers who killed Amadou Diallo last year. (See page 24.)

We have also participated in demos and meetings in defense of political prisoners in Iran. Our statement in solidarity with the struggle against the autocratic regime of Khamenei/Khateni is available upon request.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

In Germany, our comrade has participated in and written critical leaflets addressed to a variety of actions, including an anti-war demonstration and an anti-Nazi protest over Kristallnacht – the Nazis' anti-Semitic rampage in 1938. We issued two leaflets exposing the ex-Stalinist reformist PDS; one prior to a recent city council election in Bonn, the second in December analyzing its rotten role in the council thereafter.

The third in a series of COFI booklets containing

is not helped by the pseudo-revolutionary left: neither the ISO, which won't challenge his bourgeois politics in public, nor the SL, which idiotically labels him "pro-Klan" and thereby discredits any accurate criticism of him from the left.

On the subject of exposure, in this article we have exposed how the SL/PDC criminally removed themselves from the genuine anti-Klan action on October 23 and then created a fantasy world of their own to cover up their abstention. Let the Spartacists remove themselves even further from the far more arduous upheavals ahead. The mass of the working class, who have no choice but to fight for their material interests, remain unaware of the huge leap in consciousness they underwent under Spartacist tutelage. Nevertheless, in the years ahead they will learn how to overcome their present misleaders, as well as pompous centrists, and build their own working-class revolutionary party. ●

documents and articles has been issued. Translation of LRP pamphlets and *Proletarian Revolution* articles into German is also progressing. A selection of leaflets and pamphlets in German is available on our web site.

Our activity in Australia has accelerated in view of the lead that country took in the U.N.'s imperialist invasion of East Timor. Our leaflet "No Australian/U.N. Troops in East Timor" was widely distributed at events in Melbourne, in an effort to counteract the chauvinist reaction of much of the left. As well, we have put serious efforts into the ongoing protest work in defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Our work abroad has concentrated on discussions with an expanded number of groups and individuals in Europe, Latin America and the former Soviet Union.

ONGOING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

We are forming new study and discussion groups in New York, Washington, D.C. and Chicago around historical and current topics, including issues covered in this magazine. If you live in or near any of these cities and are interested, please give us a call. Also let us know if you are interested in working with us and if you wish to be on our mailing list to get word of upcoming forums in your area.

We received a letter from the *News & Letters* group charging us with misrepresenting their position on the Kosovo war in our last issue. For lack of space we could not print it in this issue. It will appear on our website, together with our reply. ●

KOVI-Dokumente III

Kosovo und das nationale Selbstbestimmungsrecht

- Selbstbestimmungsrecht und 'militärische Verteidigung'
- Selbstbestimmungsrecht, ernsthafte Menschen, Praktikabilität und Pseudorealismus
- 'Multinationalität' oder Selbstbestimmungsrecht: über den Defaitismus der 'Linken'
- Kosovo: national unterdrückt oder nicht?
- Die 'Kommunistischen' Parteien Jugoslawiens und Albaniens: oder wie der Stalinismus den Ethno-chauvinismus bedient hat

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The Revival of Authentic Marxism in the U.S.

by Sy Landy

In *Proletarian Revolution* No. 57 we replied in part to a reader's inquiry about the League for the Revolutionary Party. We explained why the LRP remained a small group for so long, despite our record of principled working-class activity and our theoretical and programmatic gains. We noted a number of factors and concluded that our isolation has mainly been a product of the times we have lived through. But we did not take up the second part of the reader's question:

Why is its [the LRP's] interpretation of the 20th century not constructed in other parts of the world (e.g., Brazil or Finland or India or Palestine or Zaire, etc.) independently of knowledge of the LRP in the U.S.? I know this may be a tough question, but that is what I wonder.

Any serious organization must deal with such questions, especially in the light of the present change in conditions. In reply, we must first review some of the history and international context which we discussed before, albeit from a different angle, since the historical and material factors that conditioned our development in the U.S. have also affected the possibility of similar groups evolving elsewhere.

LEFT EMBRACES TAILISM

The triumph of Stalinism in the USSR in the late 1930's and its spread at the end of World War II were major defeats for the working class internationally. This meant not only a bloody betrayal of actual proletarian struggles but also a thoroughgoing debasement of Marxist theory. The mass upheavals of the late 1960's and early 1970's, the next major wave of class struggle, thus represented an opportunity for the renewal of Marxism. General strikes and rebellions reached every part of the world - France, Italy, China, Poland, Czechoslovakia, South Africa, the West Indies, Latin America. In the United States, the Black working class in the urban ghettos exploded against continued racist oppression and exploitation. Wildcat strikes continually shook industry.

These working-class struggles forced our founding comrades, at the time members of the International Socialists (I.S.: the forerunner of today's International Socialist Organization and the Solidarity group) to rethink their entire world view and mold a new outlook. The working class had shown that it understood the radical character of its underlying interests and methods of struggle, far better than did the far left. The left, including the I.S., had adopted the method of tailism toward the working class, a method which was being exposed, in practice, as bankrupt.

Tailism meant raising only demands and ideas the leftists thought the mass of workers were ready to hear - as opposed to providing revolutionary leadership, showing their fellow workers that their problem was the capitalist system as a whole. Tailism was based on the patronizing and elitist idea that even though "revolutionaries" knew better, the workers were not ready to become conscious of the real situation. The idea was to cheer the workers on to be more militant; in reality this meant tailing various militant-talking reformist bureaucrats and leaders.

Thus the pseudo-revolutionary left - "centrists," in Lenin's term - joined the reformists on the tragic road into the morass the unions and the movements of the oppressed find themselves in today. For those who saw themselves as

Trotskyists, tailism meant rejecting Trotsky's insistence on telling the working class "what is" and linking their day-to-day struggles with the goal of overthrowing capitalism.

Tailism was theoretically justified by the centrists through the logic of stagism, the "common sense" idea that workers had to pass through a stage of militant struggle limited to reform demands and under reformist leadership. Only at some distant later stage would workers be ready to listen to the revolutionary program. For centrists, liberal reformism had become a necessary step toward revolution, not the counterrevolutionary barrier the Bolsheviks had seen it to be.

Tailist and stagist illusions were generated by the post-war prosperity and growth of the professional and bureaucratic middle class within capitalism, East and West. Left groups around the world, largely composed of students and former students, conceived of themselves as altruistic saviors coming from outside of the working class. Their ideas reflected the fact that they had become rooted in the intelligentsia as opposed to the proletariat.

MASS STRUGGLES EXPOSE TAILISM

The left's tailist and stagist conceptions meant that when the mass struggles broke out in the late 1960's, against the will of the reform leaders, there was no revolutionary leadership prepared to take them forward. In the momentous but unexpected general strike in France in 1968, the workers at large showed in action that they were more advanced than both the reform union leaders and the tailist left. The failure of the left to provide the way forward played no small part in the movement's ultimate derailment.

Experience thus taught our comrades to return to the authentic revolutionary politics of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. The massive revolts had lacked one essential ingredient, the conscious leadership of the most advanced workers crystallized in the form of a genuinely revolutionary vanguard party. The revolts and general strikes abroad had starkly confronted the capitalist state and had clearly posed the question of which class should rule. Optimally, if an authentic and tested communist leadership had been present, the question would have been resolved in a number of countries by the proletariat seizing power, igniting the socialist internationalist revolution which, given the conditions of the time, would have rapidly spread.

At minimum, a significant vanguard-led movement would have wrested far bigger concessions from the capitalists in country after country and left a genuine Marxist legacy in the form of much greater numbers, optimism and political clarity. In the U.S., it would have been able to put forward a lasting, broad and powerful alternative to the sectoral attempts to combat reaction. It could have shown the way to unify the liberation struggles of Blacks, Latinos and women on a class struggle basis.

Thus in the early 1970's we re-learned the old communist lesson that creating an revolutionary proletarian international had to be counterposed to the tailism, stagism and opportunism practiced by centrist misleaders as well as to the reformism of the social democratic and Stalinist parties.

Our tendency understood itself to have been created by the working class in struggle. We were a part of our class's most conscious layer, the vanguard layer most aware of its class self-interests. We had then, as now, a largely working-

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class composition and a deep involvement in class struggles of all kinds. Such a composition in itself hardly guarantees maintaining the revolutionary program. But without it, authentic communist politics would have succumbed long ago.

OTHER GROUPS INTERNATIONALLY

With these core ideas and a developing theoretical framework, our comrades, then numbering over 100, were expelled from the I.S. and formed the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) – the forerunner of the LRP – in 1973.

At the same time, the British International Socialism organization suffered similar splits under the impact of the world proletarian upsurge. Out of this political ferment, small numbers in Scotland and England came together to form a fragile and short-lived group roughly similar to the larger American RSL. In the West Indies, the Jamaican “Black Consciousness” movement spawned several political tendencies, one of which became the Revolutionary Marxist League and affiliated with the RSL. (For the Jamaican scene at the time, see our report in *Socialist Voice* No. 2.)

Although both the British and Jamaican groups were aided in their development by the RSL, they were composed of comrades who were drawing similar conclusions from their own struggles. Thus they were in their origins independent and like-minded responses to the changing world struggle. Moreover, when the RSL was born, we received a number of messages of interest from other groups around the world who felt they had important views in common with ours. However, both they and the RSL were too weak and inexperienced to deepen possible ties.

The British nucleus soon disintegrated. The RML had a greater impact upon the left in its country and persisted longer. But it had only made the first hesitant steps toward a fully Trotskyist program and, like the British group, ultimately failed to solidify its initial revolutionary conquests. In fact, it soon capitulated to petty-bourgeois tailism; in particular, in 1977 it supported the re-election of the left nationalist bourgeois prime minister Michael Manley. (See *SV* 5.)

Within a few years, the RSL returned to the centrist perspective we had split from earlier. The U.S. recession of 1973-75 set the class struggle reeling into its long-term decline. Under pro-capitalist leaderships, the workers' fightback and the Black liberation upheaval were undermined. These huge setbacks led the majority of the RSL to an ignominious political degeneration.

The RSL majority argued that the working class could not be expected to go beyond the bounds of trade unionism and democratic reforms in the forthcoming period. Instead of fighting this tidal change in class direction, they fatalistically adapted to it. The RSL majority advocated a reformist Labor Party, a stagist replacement for the task of building the nucleus of the revolutionary party. The small grouping of members that opposed this perspective was bureaucratically expelled; we formed the LRP in early 1976. (See *SV* 1 for our analysis of the RSL and the founding of the LRP. The labor party question is discussed in *SV* 6 and *PR* 40.)

AGAINST THE STREAM

The retreat of the class struggle and the capitalist counteroffensive beginning in the mid-1970's was a worldwide phenomenon that also limited the development of new revolutionary tendencies elsewhere. Our current held on against the predominant rightward-moving current only in the U.S.

In the early 1980's we recruited a well known Australian

comrade who had moved toward conclusions similar to ours. By the early 1990's, the Workers Revolution Group he founded had begun to recruit a core of revolutionary youth in the industrial city of Melbourne and was playing a prominent role in a number of struggles waged by factory workers, immigrants and the unemployed. However, defeats inflicted on the workers' movement led to a cynical demoralization among some members, similar to what we had seen in the RSL. The WRG eventually collapsed, with our tendency retaining only a couple of its members.

Likewise, we attracted and then lost a small group in Sweden which had begun to develop in our direction. (The loss of our Australian and Swedish affiliates is analyzed in *PR* 48.) More recently, we have developed fraternal ties to an experienced comrade in Germany which we expect will lead to the forging of a group there in the future.

On the question of independent arrivals at revolutionary ideas, the LRP today has a number of members from overseas who individually reached some of the fundamental lessons of Marxism that define our organization. Only after their initial breakthroughs did they come into contact with us – and through study, discussion and joint work come to agree with our full world view. They all think it extremely unlikely that they could have withstood the suffocating near-hegemony of the centrist groups within the far left without subsequent contact with the LRP, a group with a body of experience and writings that confirmed and cemented their revolutionary conclusions.

In sum, the LRP's outlook developed alone, but not all alone. We imagine that other individuals and groupings that we are unaware of similarly drew initial revolutionary conclusions from their experiences in the class struggle. But in the absence of any international confirmation of their positions, and given the decline and defeat of the mass movements, they later disappeared unnoticed into the centrist ranks. What is certainly true is that the development of organizations with authentic Marxist politics, whether because of our direct influence or through a more independent path, has been a slow and fragile process.

CONFIRMATION DOES NOT IMPLY CORRECTNESS

We do not claim that the small companion developments described here constitute proof that our outlook is correct. However, a related idea is suggested by the question our reader asked and is often put to us explicitly: that if larger numbers and other groups independently came to similar conclusions, that would validate our views. This proposition is false: under the unfavorable circumstances we faced, even large independent concurrences would not have proven our claim to authentic Marxism.

To illustrate, take the reformist doctrines elaborated by Eduard Bernstein around the beginning of the 20th century. His “revisionism” had many counterparts in the theory and practice of social democrats in many Western nations – a good number of whom came to their conclusions independently. The seedbed for the flourishing of reformism was the expansion of imperialist exploitation. Capitalism seemed prosperous, and reforms were being dealt out in the hope of calming working-class struggles. The material reality that created the labor aristocracy did not testify to any fundamental truth in Bernstein's outlook that reformism was the way forward for the entire working class.

We are not reductionists; the wholesale degeneration of the social democrats into the swamp of counterrevolution and

national chauvinism in World War I was not fatalistically determined in advance because its objective potential was present. Nevertheless, we understand the objective factors that allowed the degeneration to occur and spread widely.

Those factors also help explain the isolation of the authentic Marxists: at the outset of the war, the Russian Bolsheviks dwindled rapidly; only a small revolutionary group existed in Germany, tiny groups elsewhere. Tangible reforms and social patriotism had seemed to make Lenin's revolutionary framework unreal. What makes us regard Lenin as an authentic Marxist was not that he simply mimicked Marx's outlook; he had to develop it theoretically in accordance with the changing material world around him. At crucial times there were precious few comrades who agreed with his views on the proletarian vanguard party, imperialism, the labor aristocracy, the national question and the war. By itself, given the conditions, Lenin's relative isolation at those times didn't make his views right or wrong.

We do not judge Marxists by the extent of independent corroboration of their views *when conditions are adverse to revolutionary ideas*. However, there is a much greater confirmation to be expected *when the objective and subjective conditions turn favorable to revolutionary communism*; of course, one first has to ask whether the views of the group illuminate the road forward. Real proof of Leninism only came when Bolshevik leadership led to the victory of the workers' revolution of 1917.

Obviously, the LRP has never faced such a test in practice; nor has any organization in the U.S. today. Our point is not to equate the degrees of isolation the Russian Bolsheviks faced then and we do now. Our isolation has been far greater; we are far smaller. Nor do we say we cannot be tested by less-than-revolutionary events – indeed, we believe that our politics have stood up noticeably well in current struggles described in this issue. Still, revolutionary conditions are the ultimate test of any would-be revolutionary party.

ADVANTAGES IN THE UNITED STATES

Another aspect of the problem is inherent in our reader's question: why was it only in the U.S., of all places, that the long-term development of our revolutionary Marxist views was able to occur?

One obvious factor is the comparative prosperity and openness of the United States in this period. The American comrades had access to the writings of all the great revolutionary thinkers. In particular, the formative years of our tendency corresponded with the publication of most of Trotsky's lesser known writings, easily obtainable in English for the first time. Just as we were raising crucial questions about the I.S.'s politics, we could read Trotsky polemicizing against similar centrist groups of his day.

Moreover, although our comrades were hardly rich, the post-war prosperity did afford us the opportunity to study and intervene in action, generally free from the elementary daily struggle to simply survive. While political repression did exist, there was considerable leeway, a luxury by no means enjoyed by revolutionaries in many other parts of the world.

Of course, since some of these same conditions did exist in a few other countries, this cannot be the full answer. We do not deny the existence of either chance or reasons of individual character. The comrades who first spearheaded our development, although few in number, had considerable experience and a level of authority built up over years of struggle so that they could not be simply dismissed. They had

built groups in the past and could now attract other comrades and build another organization on a new programmatic basis. Therefore the ideas they initially helped develop could take root, persist and grow.

But above all there were specific historical reasons that made the United States a likely place for the resurrection of Marxism in the post-war world, in spite of its imperialist arrogance and the stifling middle-class hegemony of its left. Compared with other countries, Stalinism in the U.S. had always been relatively weak. It was not a dominant party in the working class. In several imperialist countries, popular-front politics made the Communist Parties seem to be independent allies of the liberal bourgeoisie; but in the U.S., the CP was little more than an appendage to the Democrats. To revolutionary-minded workers, that was anathema. Similarly, social democracy in the U.S. never built a large or stable presence in the working class and could not successfully distinguish itself from the bourgeois Democrats.

Trotskyism, therefore, while never approaching the CP in size, has had a distinct appeal to specific advanced layers of the working class. The Socialist Workers Party, when it was a part of the revolutionary Fourth International, claimed some thousands of members. Unlike in many other countries, Trotskyism at the outset won the allegiance of a well known and very experienced section of the Communist Party leadership. In the 1930's the U.S. Trotskyists won a key portion of left intellectuals away from the Stalinists. And as compared to other sections, the Americans were strongly organized.

It was no accident, therefore, that from the beginning of the International Left Opposition, Trotsky relied on the U.S. section and its publications, under his guidance, to take the lead theoretically and practically for the rest of the world Trotskyist movement. That has been part of our inheritance.

Indeed, Trotsky paid enormous attention to the U.S. group, giving an ongoing critical analysis of its work and offering opinions on questions like the union movement and the struggle against racism. Particularly helpful to us in the 1970's was his intervention in the critical faction fight inside the SWP in 1939-40. His writings against the faction led by Max Shachtman, collected in the book *In Defense of Marxism*, provided a crucial analysis of the centrism in the U.S. which we were rebelling from. It brought us to see the centrality of the vanguard party.

Even before that faction fight, where he made the dialectic a central issue, Trotsky had hammered his American followers time and again about the need to eradicate the "Anglo-Saxon" disease of pragmatism if they were to build a Marxist leadership. Comrades in the U.S. seriously rethinking the meaning of Marxism were literally forced to take note. Without question, our ability to fashion a new world view owed an enormous debt to Trotsky's U.S.-based fight for historical dialectical understanding.

THE BLACK MOVEMENT IN THE U.S.

One specific question was absolutely central. It was no accident that the leading document that paved the way for our political separation from the I.S. was about the Black rebellions that swept the U.S. in the late 60's and early 70's. These ghetto-based upheavals and the industrial strikes that convulsed the nation forced us to examine in depth the relation between class exploitation and racial superexploitation. As working-class revolutionaries, we had to work within the seemingly separate struggles of oppressed Blacks and the industrial working class, just as the ghetto revolts forced open

the gates of industry to layers of young Black workers who provided an infusion of new fighting leaders for the working class and its revolutionary potential.

Armed with Trotsky's observation that the Black struggle was part of the permanent revolution perspective (a reality denied by most U.S. groups that consider themselves Trotskyist!), we began to elaborate an understanding of the Black movement that we now call proletarian interracialism. (See our pamphlet, *Marxism, Interracialism and the Black Struggle*.)

We saw that the Black revolt, while it could force enormous concessions and compel the end to legal segregation, could not achieve genuine equality or liberation under capitalism. In the U.S., the most prosperous and stable imperialist power in the world, capitalism still could not solve the "Black question." Democratic rights and real equality could only be securely achieved through socialist revolution. Neither integration (assimilation) nor nationalism was a viable path. Racism was an essential and inescapable foundation of capitalism in this country.

Further, communist revolutionaries must defend the democratic right of Blacks to choose their own path, their right to self-organization and self-defense. Just as national self-determination applied to oppressed nations, self-organization was a right of oppressed castes. There could be no united working-class fight that denied this right.

To return to authentic Marxism, we had to add to and re-apply its analysis and its theory. The question facing us was not simply whether Marxism could explain the Black struggle in proletarian terms, but also to understand how the Black struggle could change and extend Marxism. Marx taught us that reality is always changing; understanding it must constantly change as well. We were compelled to develop revolutionary theory in order to maintain it.

Thus in the United States our foundation was the product of an ongoing class war situated at the interface of the industrial struggles and a powerful movement of the oppressed. This confluence had not yet been seen as sharply and massively by revolutionaries abroad, although the continuing development of U.S.-style racial and ethnic oppression - and division of the working class - is becoming a decisive factor all over the world.

The intersection of the heritage of Trotsky's insistence on revolutionary theory, coupled with the Black explosion, is the major reason why authentic Marxism could be revived in the U.S. The combination provided the strength for our small organization to survive when other larger groups succumbed to the tide.

TRANSFORMATION AHEAD

At the turn of the new century, a transformation in the objective conditions and the class balance of forces is beginning. Around the world, the middle-classes and labor aristocracies are dwindling under the blows of deepening economic crisis. Although their rotten legacy remains, the reformist and centrist misleaderships have a diminishing grip on the working class. To what extent our views are developed independently and how we fare under those circumstances will soon become relevant if not yet conclusive questions. As we have already been reporting in our press, we already see positive signs.

In the 1980's we elaborated our unique analysis of the degeneration of the Russian revolution and the class nature of the "socialist" countries, a central problem that any Marxist tendency has to confront. Our theory, resting on the

understanding of working-class consciousness and struggle we had learned, explained how both workers' gains and defeats were embodied in the stratified capitalist system. It enabled us to foresee Stalinism's fall and its rulers' efforts to adopt traditional bourgeois methods of labor discipline.

The way Stalinism collapsed and the cold war ended have already vindicated our understanding of the direction of world events. But analysis cannot rest upon its laurels. In the early 1990's, we presented the perspective that world capitalism was weakest in regions where economic development was "uneven and combined"; its contradictions were maturing more rapidly there. As with our understanding of the Black struggle in the U.S., our world perspective rested on the theory of permanent revolution. We cited the Stalinist and former Stalinist countries, the Pacific Rim "tigers" and South Africa as the most decisive areas. We focused our expectations for the emergence of initial revolutionary communist working-class forces on South Africa, the former Soviet Union and China.

Soon we came into contact with an important group of South African revolutionaries now known as the Workers International Vanguard League. Independently of us, they had drawn a number of basic conclusions similar to ours on the importance of working-class independence and revolutionary party leadership. They seemed steadfast in opposition to the reformist social democrats and Stalinists and hostile to the centrists. As we have reported in previous editions of *PR*, we have attempted to pursue discussions of program and theory with the WIVL. While we are very disappointed by the slow pace of this dialogue, we still have reason to hope that it will ultimately lead to principled agreement on a common political program.

More recently a serious workers' group, previously unknown to us, in the former Soviet Union has contacted us, indicating that it believes that its theoretical framework is close to ours. We are now exchanging views in a positive way and will soon be reporting on these developments.

As well, it should be noted that we are now engaged in a variety of discussions with other tendencies abroad, who while not as close to our views as those we have described, nevertheless have important points in common. We are confident that a new day is dawning.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Today, the growing international economic crisis has destroyed Stalinism and continues to undermine the appeal of social democracy to workers moving left. The working class is thus in a stronger position to launch revolutionary struggles today; the shape of these struggles can already be seen in the mass strikes, demonstrations and upheavals that have exploded in the former USSR and in the Pacific Rim nations. The proletariat is also in better shape to rediscover Marxist theory and thus pave the way for a new vanguard.

There is every reason to believe that the coming struggles will give rise to new leaderships moving in the direction of authentic Marxism. The small but significant contacts we have already made in South Africa and the former Soviet Union are a sign of greater things to come.

One further point on the question of our virtual isolation: we do not like the degree to which our views are unique to us. In our opinion, the chasm is dictated by class differences, not simply tactical issues or any sectarian desire to be pure and alone. In contrast, most of the highly divided far left groups around the world do not claim that their differ-

ences with each other are of a class nature. Given that outlook, they let tactical differences divide them. That is abject organizational sectarianism.

Unlike those groups who see little or no potential for the development of genuine revolutionary politics outside of their own magic touch, we expect and seek out such developments. Of course, we also want to convince others who are attracted by the LRP away from previously held political ideas. In both cases, we want co-thinkers and not colonies. Colonial pawns cannot make socialist revolutions.

Our tendency is nearly a quarter-century old. We believe we have used twenty-plus years to understand the legacy of Bolshevik-Leninism and use it to lay down a solid theoretical and programmatic foundation for building the international

Vieques

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In 1998 there was a powerful general strike by the workers against privatization: selling off the state telephone company to a U.S. corporation. (See *PR 58*.) Puerto Rico has been out-competed by other low-wage countries, above all Mexico and the Dominican Republic. The partial loss of tax exemptions previously provided to U.S. firms has led to major disinvestment; there have been drastic layoffs and increased austerity already. Pharmaceutical companies, an important part of the economy, are starting to downsize and close. Conditions are expected to get far worse in a few years when certain tax exemptions are withdrawn completely. These declining conditions have pushed the working class to the wall; another mass upheaval is just a matter of time.

Vieques could be the spark to a new general strike movement in Puerto Rico. As Vieques demonstrates, a great deal of Puerto Rico's importance for U.S. imperialism lies in its important geographical position. Its locale is ideal for U.S. military power imposing its hegemony over the rest of Latin America. Washington has ceded formal control over the Panama Canal, and its Southern Command, which organizes military interventions in Latin America, has moved to Puerto Rico. U.S.-trained troops used Vieques as a launching pad for the invasions of the Dominican Republic in 1965, Grenada and Panama as well as the covert wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua. In the increasingly likely event that Washington will use the "war on drugs" as a pretext for a new dirty war in Colombia, U.S. "advisers" and U.S.-trained Colombian troops would doubtless be sent out from Puerto Rico, separated from Colombia by only a few hundred miles of ocean.

Vieques is also a base menacing other areas of the world. As the main training location for the Navy's Atlantic Fleet, Vieques has been a necessary stop along the way to strategic locations in the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. Bomber pilots involved in the destruction of Serbia and Iraq practiced first on Vieques. And Vieques is a main training location for other NATO navies.

In this light, getting the Navy out of Vieques is not just the business of Puerto Ricans. All who oppose U.S. imperialism have an interest in handing it a serious setback.

CLINTON'S ROTTEN OFFER

After Sanes was killed last April, activists began camp-

party needed to lead the coming struggles to victory. This work has placed us in a strong position to search out and assist the development of revolutionary groups elsewhere.

Self-confidence, the enemy of today's fashionably cynical skepticism, is decisive with respect to leadership. Self-confidence is the opposite of ego- and ethnocentric arrogance. We know that not only will our views find independent confirmation elsewhere, but that such developments will have their own uniqueness. We search not simply for basic agreement but also for different adaptations of the Marxist method that different class-struggle experiences will produce. The resulting exchanges and argumentation will provide a new synthesis which will inevitably transcend our beginning steps. ●

ing out on territory occupied by the military in Vieques in protest. At that point, Clinton was stalling in the face of the broad popular threat. He appointed a special panel to further ponder the question. As things dragged on, tension built up since bombing would have routinely been scheduled to re-commence in December 1999. For several weeks in late fall, Clinton and Governor Pedro Rosselló, along with the military brass, engaged in secret backroom "negotiations," with Rosselló claiming to the media he had matters well in hand. Finally, on December 3, Clinton and Secretary of Defense Cohen announced the orders they would be issuing to the military. The routine bombing scheduled for December would not occur; bombing would be postponed to the spring. A package offer was also announced, including:

- The Navy will pay \$40 million for "economic development" on Vieques, contingent on the resumption of live-fire training exercises.
- The USS Eisenhower battle group would train elsewhere, off the coasts of Georgia, South Carolina and Scotland.
- Military use of Vieques would be phased out *over five years* in order to give the Navy a chance to find an alternative – unless the Viequesenses chose to consent to continued Navy presence.

● Future bombing runs would be limited to 90 days out of the year, without live ordnance, and again with an exception in case of local consent. This training would resume in the spring. (A practical gain from the negotiations was that no bombing took place in December, as usually happens.)

The Puerto Rican masses reacted with anger and shock to this offer. Clearly the Navy hoped to use the money as a bribe and bargaining chip. Moreover, to even refer to the "consent" of the "Viequesenses" for a continued Navy presence is an insult, given the mass opposition throughout Puerto Rico. The offer, among other things, was a maneuver to dispose of the matter as the concern of residents of Vieques only, not of all Puerto Ricans.

Of course, Clinton will not be president in five years. Since Puerto Ricans living on the mainland can vote, Democratic presidential candidates Gore and Bradley have pandered to them by uttering a few words of sympathy over the hardships in Vieques. But there is no reason to believe that once in office either would be any less favorable to the military than the Republicans. After all, the Democrat Clinton has continued his Republican predecessors' policy of terror bombings and invasions of small countries to enforce U.S. imperialism's world hegemony. Vieques was

vital for those campaigns, and Gore or Bradley would be just as certain to continue them as McCain or Bush.

Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jay Johnson called Vieques "an irreplaceable asset" and "the crown jewel of live-fire, combined-arms training." He has promised not to work to remove the installation but to "convince" the Viequeses to acquiesce. The Navy clearly hopes that Clinton's successor will feel no need to carry out any election-season promises they might make to Puerto Rican voters.

THE MAINSTREAM PARTIES

Clinton's sleazy proposal still represented a concession on his part, a response to the intense unpopularity of the military presence in Vieques. The question for the mass of Puerto Ricans and their supporters abroad is how to throw the imperialists out.

If a mass struggle is unleashed, the U.S. Navy could indeed be kicked out of Vieques. For it would present Washington with an enormous threat. Any mass uprising by Puerto Rican workers would clearly expose Washington's democratic pretensions and the island's colonial

status. A military confrontation by U.S. armed forces would be a catastrophic embarrassment for Washington, which continues to pontificate against Russia for subjugating Chechnya. Clinton obviously fears such a development.

It would also expose the mainstream political parties on the island. Governor Rosselló represents the ruling pro-statehood party, the Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP). Sila Calderón, who is running against Rosselló for governor in next November's elections, is the main mouthpiece of the more liberal Partido Democrático Popular (PPD), which supports the current "commonwealth" status. Third is the much smaller Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP), which calls for an independent capitalist Puerto Rico to be established through electoral and legislative means (like appealing to Congress and the United Nations.)

None of these parties actually want to eliminate the imperialist relation between the U.S. and Puerto Rico, no matter how much they would like to change the specific status of relations. Their political ties to the U.S. hamper their ability to fight effectively even for the Navy's withdrawal from Vieques - all the more because any serious struggle to kick the U.S. military out of Vieques would raise the question of U.S. military presence in all of Puerto Rico.

The proclivity to capitulate is relatively obvious in the cases of the PNP and the PPD: these parties are known as the colonial parties for good reason. They have no history of real opposition to the U.S. military in Vieques or anywhere else, since they basically support imperialism's aims. In general, they differ only over how the supposed "partnership" between Puerto Rico and U.S. imperialism

should be carried out. Thus, despite their lip service over Vieques, they have not managed to join the forces camped out in protest.

Governor Rosselló in particular has no history of favoring the Navy's immediate withdrawal. As a pro-statehood politician, logic clearly points him the other way. One wing of the statehooders is led by the Old Guard, in the person of Luis Ferre, and is completely submissive to Washington no matter what. Rosselló leads the wing that calls for a statehood based on equality, an end to second-class citizenship, and even a hard-nosed approach to Washington. He projects himself as a strong governor who won't blink in the face of an outright racist Republican or



even the President. But he still needs to prove to Washington that Puerto Rico can be "just another state": socially quiescent, loyal and eager for military bases.

The PPD (called the "populares") is descended from former Governor Luis Muñoz Marín, who went from an independentista to a "commonwealth" advocate. The commonwealth idea has always included support for the establishment and maintenance of military bases and sweetheart deals with the U.S. Since the populares were the dominant colonial administrators for so many decades, their "support" for a total withdrawal from Vieques now is certainly dubious; U.S. dominance over Vieques is clearly a result of the existing commonwealth relationship. The PPD's best bet is to hope that a PNP sellout will get them off the hook.

In contrast, the PIP has distinguished itself by playing a leading role in the Vieques struggle. But it too wants to maintain a dependent relation on the U.S. - its "independence" option in the 1989 plebiscite called for the continuation of U.S. military presence in Puerto Rico for 25 years! Not without reason, many nationalist-minded independentistas routinely boycott these plebiscites, given the fraud of the "independence" option as put forward by the PIP. In large part, the PIP is trying to use the Vieques issue to rescue it from marginality in Puerto Rican politics.

The PIP's economic program is thoroughly capitalist. It has often asserted that its vision for Puerto Rico is to accomplish what Mandela has done in South Africa: Mandela symbolizes the removal of racist apartheid but has continued the superexploitation of South African Black workers. The PIP's projected economic program for an "independent" Puerto Rico also accepts continued

dependence on U.S. investments on the island – although it also wishes to open up the Puerto Rican market for European investment. As long as Puerto Rico's economy is based on capitalism, it needs investments from the U.S. or Europe. To do so it must provide incentives like low wages and long hours and tax breaks. If it doesn't face these capitalist realities, it will decline even further in the face of competition by other imperialist-dominated countries. The PIP has no solution to this dilemma because there is none under any capitalist rule.

This is why authentic Marxists argue that there is no way Puerto Rico can possibly have even the semblance of independent bourgeois development in a world dominated by imperialism. Only after the socialist revolution, when the major means of production are expropriated from the imperialist overlords, can a workers' state make a start in raising productivity in an oppressed nation like Puerto Rico. (We will return to this later.) Thus the PIP, like the other treacherous bourgeois parties, represents no answer to imperialist domination over the Puerto Rican masses.

HOW THE STRUGGLE DEVELOPED

It is no accident, therefore, that none of the bourgeois parties have pointed to the only solution for Vieques. They have avoided calling for mass working-class mobilization to kick the U.S. Navy out. To illustrate this key point, we need to review how the struggle has been carried out so far.

After Sanes's death, Ruben Berrios, the head of PIP, established an encampment on the Navy-owned hill in Vieques where the killing occurred. This was joined by encampments representing other forces, including environmentalists, community activists, unions and fishermen.

The encampment tactic is his central strategy. It had been utilized successfully by Berrios in the early 1970's, after several children were killed by Navy exercises in neighboring Culebra. But the end of that operation left Vieques as the last site for live bombing practice in Puerto Rico. There was every reason to believe that the fight now would be much tougher than three decades before.

The PIP's commitment to the encampment strategy entailed leaving negotiations over the future of Vieques to Rosselló. While the PIP "invited" the PNP and PDP to join the encampments, it demanded no commitment that would expose them if they did not put their bodies on the line. In the Special Commission, the PIP joined the other parties in building the illusion that all three main bourgeois parties were united around the key demands. The PIP refrained from criticizing its overtly pro-imperialist opponents and didn't warn about their inevitable betrayal down the road. Indeed, Manuel Rodríguez Orellana, an important PIP spokesperson, enthused about the new unity, contrasting it with the anti-PIP attacks made by the PNP and PDP during the Culebra struggle:

What a difference a few decades make! Now there is

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solid support and the independence movement is not alone in calling for the permanent cessation of military practices and the devolution of Navy-held territory. Now everyone, including the Archbishop of San Juan, who called this practice "immoral," wants the Navy to stop.

Yet before the strong recommendations of the Special Commission came out, Rosselló had already been making his conciliatory intentions quite obvious. Only because of popular sentiment was he compelled to go along with the Special Commission recommendations. It was also obvious that Rosselló was gearing for a sellout during the first set of secret negotiations in the Fall. When the Clinton offer was announced, again popular sentiment forced Rosselló to reject it as adamantly as he did. Thus saluting him for rejecting Clinton's first offer was another case of building illusions: a serious newspaper reader could see that Rosselló and those around him were just not satisfied that the particular deal didn't give them enough political cover.

Rosselló was capable of an opportunistic response to mass pressure. But it was absurd to think he would really buck the U.S. in a showdown. After all, he is U.S. imperialism's most steadfast political supporter in Puerto Rico and the grand architect of a series of privatization campaigns and assaults on protective labor laws on the island. As well, he dutifully served as commander of the police attacks on the proletarian general strike that shook the island in 1998.

It was also remarkable that the PIP remained mute regarding the secret negotiations. Serious fighters would have insisted that there was nothing to negotiate from the beginning. At minimum, relying on mass support, they would have demanded open negotiations.

PIP STICKS WITH COLONIAL PARTIES

Now the veneer of unanimity in Puerto Rico has cracked. The implications of the second round of secret negotiations are becoming more evident. In particular, the press has been running articles, day after day, explaining that Rosselló was likely to go for a deal that allowed the use of inert bombs as long as a definite date for departure was set; his objection to the first offer was that it left the question of definite departure too obviously open.

The PDP, as represented by Sila Calderón, is still maintaining its stance of unity with Rosselló and an unwarranted optimism that a good result will win out. Ex-Senator Fernando Martín, vice-president of the PIP, recently admitted, "Everything points to a governmental disposition toward acceptance of renewed bombing in exchange for a fixed departure date, which is unacceptable to us, and I believe it is also unacceptable to the majority of the Puerto Rican people." (*El Nuevo Día*, Jan. 2.)

But the awareness of an imminent sellout hasn't meant any change in practice. The PIP maintains its reliance on symbolic acts of civil disobedience and hopes for the growth of the protest encampments. In the article just cited, Berrios says that if they are dislodged without being arrested (a possible tactic to prevent growing sympathy for the activists), "we would return to the restricted areas because you can be sure that the Army has to pay the price." That's it. The PIP still refrains from any talk of mobilizing the biggest power on the island, the Puerto Rican working class.

(We will take up the positions of left nationalist and socialist groupings in this struggle in a subsequent article.)

In some cases the PIP has even moved against more militant elements in Vieques. For example, the PNP, Police Chief Toledo, and the Archbishop of San Juan all condemned the expansion of the civil disobedience when it moved to blockade the Navy's access to its weapons storage facilities at Camp Garcia in December. At the time, the PIP added its own weight to the reactionary pressure exerted by its allies, in the guise of advice to the militants. Martín demagogically pointed out:

I recommend that [the blockaders] be extremely cautious and careful because this is the type of situation that the Marines would take advantage of because of its sensitivity and they may move their agents in; and the only ones in Puerto Rico who want to bring about violence in the Vieques situation are the promoters and backers of the Marines. (*El San Juan Star*, Dec. 9.)

The best interpretation of the PIP's line is that militant action like the blockade might bring about a violent response from U.S. forces and therefore is a bad idea. The worst is that Martín is accusing the blockaders of being U.S. Marine agents. Under pressure, the blockade was disbanded.

PIP FEARS WORKERS STRUGGLE VS. IMPERIALISM

In addition to the large-scale popular protests around Vieques (and also against environmental damage from the Roosevelt Roads Naval Base), there were mass demonstrations demanding the unconditional release of Puerto Rican political prisoners. Most of these prisoners had been in U.S. jails for two decades even though they were never linked to any particular bombings or acts of terror. Their outrageously long sentences made it obvious that their victimization was part of the overall aggression by the U.S. against any anti-imperialist struggle by Puerto Ricans. In September, 11 prisoners were granted a heavily conditional "clemency" deal – a political straitjacket imposed by Clinton in rejecting the just demand for their unconditional release.

It does not take a Marxist to recognize how volatile the situation is. As Carlos R. Rivera pointed out:

If the U.S. insists on resuming the bombing on Vieques, all those claims by U.S. leaders that the Puerto Rican political prisoners were common criminals and terrorists will really emerge as nothing but twisted lies. We are sure that the Minute Men of 1776 would not have put up with what the Puerto Rican residents of Vieques have had to endure. Just as we know that the inhabitants of Martha's Vineyard or Staten Island would not put up with the Navy bombing their islands. They wouldn't tolerate it for a couple of hours ... the U.S. Navy's shooting will be no less than an act of state terrorism. (*The Free Press*.)

Certainly the working class is already making this connection. And workers' hostility to the imperialist-backed war against Puerto Rican independentistas can only be accelerated by the recent exposure of the so-called "carpetas" (subversive dossiers) campaign. Thousands of Puerto Ricans, largely independence supporters, were spied on and harassed by the commonwealth police intelligence unit for decades. Information on the victims was used to deny them employment, instigate unlawful arrests and other attacks; the victims included Puerto Ricans from every walk of life. Rosselló publicly apologized and has attempted to quiet down the whole scandal with a paltry cash settlement to a small number of the victims. But significant reports have

come out showing the decisive role of the FBI and other wings of the U.S. government behind the affair.

Despite the growing discontent of Puerto Rican workers with U.S. imperialism on both economic and political grounds, the PIP did not call for mass workers' demonstrations, even when arrests and renewed bombing were imminently posed in early December. Now more than ever, working-class action would also be a way to put a stop to Rosselló's barely hidden intentions to sell out. Why doesn't the PIP call for such a mobilization?

The fact is that pro-capitalist parties like the PIP are afraid to unleash the power of the working class, even though this is the way to win the demands they want. A working-class upheaval over political as well as economic questions is a threat that the PIP fears. The 1998 general strike took on a pronounced political character but was undercut and sold out by the pro-capitalist union leadership. Yet even though it did not win its objective, the massive power of the Puerto Rican working class was evident to all.

If the working class was mobilized, the demands against the military in Vieques would too easily transform the struggle in a direction which the PIP wants to avoid at all cost. The workers would use a big strike or other mass action to carry forward their hostility to privatization and other attacks fostered by the imperialists and their lackeys.

"TERRORISM" AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The imperialists and their friends in Puerto Rico label groups like Los Macheteros and the FALN (Armed Forces of National Liberation) "terrorist" in order to hypocritically denounce their "violence" – as if the imposition of colonial status were not the real act of violence against a whole people, as if colonialism had occurred non-violently or could ever be maintained without the army and police. Colonialism is in fact an act of state terror. Nevertheless, the strategy of groups like the Macheteros has mainly revolved around bombing particular installations or targets associated with the U.S. oppressor, as both symbolic acts and an attempt to intimidate the U.S. into changing policy. This strategy has not gained the support of the working class, by and large; our class has far better methods at its disposal.

Nevertheless, the Puerto Rican workers overwhelmingly supported the unconditional release of the U.S.-held prisoners. There was a demonstration of over 100,000 in San Juan last summer demanding their unconditional release. There is at the very least a sense of self-respect and pride when workers see the Macheteros, as Puerto Ricans, reassert their right to use violence against the oppressor, if it should again bomb in Vieques. Authentic Marxists of every nationality join with those workers in rejecting the hypocritical preachings of the mass murderers in Washington who castigate the "terrorism" of the oppressed.

The problem is that the small acts of guerrillaism that left nationalists engage in do not do any serious damage to imperialist rule. Their strategy flows from the fact that these radical groups are not rooted in the working class. It is no accident that their method of struggle is based on acts of a small elite rather than helping to build working-class struggles which utilize the powerful position of our class in society, its ability to act collectively and its potential to develop anti-capitalist consciousness. These groupings have no desire to help develop the conscious struggle of the working class. This is the main reason why we reject so-

called "terrorism" as a strategy for the oppressed, even though at certain times specific acts cannot be excluded as subordinate tactics within the context of mass struggle.

Our rejection of urban guerrillaism has nothing in common with the pacifism preached by the PIP, which brags about its non-violence. Civil disobedience generally means a conscious decision to break a law. The purpose is generally to demonstrate symbolically that the law itself is an injustice and therefore deserves to be violated. However, civil disobedience also implies pacifism – at best a strategy designed to either avoid an attack by the state or to win public sympathy in the case of an attack. As a philosophy it equates the self-defense of the oppressed with the violence of the oppressor. Concretely, the position of the PIP is that the people in the Vieques struggle should remain passive no matter what. It is another aspect of the PIP's effort to prevent the protests from ever achieving a mass character. Massive participation by the working class is unimaginable if passivity in the face of attacks by the local police or the feds is demanded; workers will fight back when they see they have the numbers and power to do so. Furthermore, a strategy of civil disobedience means leaving activists not only open to arrest and physical danger; even more importantly, it means the protests will be brushed aside and isolated as soon as the authorities find it convenient.

Nevertheless, we do not wish to imply that activities like encampments or sit-downs are never useful as tactics within the overall struggle. It certainly made sense to camp out in Vieques. If the feds dare to go there to arrest demonstrators, that could gain more popular support for the movement and make the U.S. look like the monster it is to an even larger audience – as happened when the police rioted in Seattle. *(See page 3.)

But however embarrassing that would be for Washington, such occurrences are not enough to win. A useful tactic is no substitute for a successful strategy. In order to get the military out of Vieques and out of Puerto Rico, fighters are needed, not sacrificial lambs. Mass action by the working class in the form of a general strike would create a chokehold on profits. And mass workers' demonstrations openly willing to defend themselves would be the best kind of deterrent to the use of arms by the imperialists. The police are less likely to attack if they fear an armed defense. And as we have pointed out above, Washington is more likely to back off and leave Vieques altogether if a full-scale battle smashes its ideological mask as the democratic defender of the oppressed in the Balkans, the Middle East, etc.

Revolutionaries must defend today's demonstrators from all attacks by the imperialists and their agents. However, a greater struggle with wider goals is vital if the roots of the poisonous weed are to be removed.

U.S. MILITARY OUT OF ALL OF PUERTO RICO!

Puerto Rican workers already know that the bombing of Vieques is far from the only abuse they have suffered under U.S. rule. These abuses have a common cause. And in Puerto Rico, as in other "third world" countries, the workers are aware that superexploitation and oppression at the hands of imperialism is common to all of them.

As revolutionary internationalists, we openly seek the defeat of U.S. imperialism in the current confrontation in Puerto Rico. We stand for a full withdrawal not only from

Vieques but from all of Puerto Rico. For Puerto Ricans, it would mean no longer being subject to the injury, indignity and oppression of military occupation. It would strengthen their ability to exercise their right of self-determination without being menaced by the U.S. military. A full withdrawal would be a victory not only for Puerto Ricans but for all the workers and oppressed of the world.

Even more important than the military-technical setback for the U.S. would be its political and symbolic consequences. A defeat for U.S. imperialism in its main directly-ruled colony would not only expose its pseudo-democratic claims abroad, it could demoralize the imperialists – much as their defeat in Vietnam did a generation ago. Adm. Johnson expressed the fear that a victory for Vieques could revive movements against U.S. bases in other nations as well. In a joint statement with Marine Corps commandant Gen. James L. Jones, he said:

Our friends and allies also have interest groups that would prefer that these activities not take place near their communities. The "not-in-my-backyard" movement is a phenomenon that, if it succeeds at home, could greatly undermine training opportunities abroad.

His fear is our hope. We believe that it is critical to fight for a victory in Vieques and also to fight for the perspective of expanding the struggle into opposition to the whole U.S. military presence in Puerto Rico. At the same time, a call for an international struggle against the U.S. military must be launched. All this is possible but only through determined mass struggle up to and including a general strike.

FOR WORKING-CLASS LEADERSHIP

The task for revolutionary workers in Puerto Rico, as elsewhere, is to build a revolutionary party to fight for a leadership that will prevent any more betrayals and defeats. What steps can be taken in this direction? And how can working-class militants fight to build the workers' struggle?

In Puerto Rico, both the unions and the left have strongly expressed their support for Vieques. Yet in practice that has meant mainly sending small delegations to reinforce the civil disobedience encampments, rather than organizing for working-class mass action against the Navy. Here on the U.S. mainland, the AFL-CIO, in a welcome departure from its usual wholesale endorsement of imperialist militarism, voted at its convention to demand the complete removal of the Navy from Vieques.

This is significant, despite the fact that at the same convention the bureaucrats gave their usual endorsement to the Democratic Party establishment's favorite – Clinton's henchman, Al Gore. It is still a step forward, even though the resolution did not call on any unions to take concrete action in defense of Vieques. Its importance only lies in the fact that the AFL-CIO bureaucrats felt forced to give cover for the Democrats, which they did only because of the determined support of Puerto Ricans for the struggle. On

Letters Welcome

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

Self-Determination, Independence and Revolution

The struggle over Vieques has already put the question of Puerto Rico's status into bold relief once again. It is not by accident that there has been no decisive movement one way or another on this question for a long time. All the capitalist alternatives for Puerto Rico are dead ends.

Yet as we have previously explained, revolutionaries must defend the right of self-determination in Puerto Rico; that is, we defend Puerto Rico's right to secede if the people there so choose. (See *PR 59* for a detailed discussion of self-determination in general, *PR 58* on Puerto Rico.) Only when the working class in the imperialist countries becomes the most steadfast advocate of the right to choose independence, can oppressed workers see the vast difference between the workers and the imperialists in the imperialist countries. Only then will they believe that authentic communist internationalism rather than any form of nationalism is in their best interest. That is why Leninists champion the right of self-determination and fight within the working class in the U.S. to convince our fellow workers of this policy.

However, it is a mistake to believe that *defense* of the right of self-determination automatically means *advocacy* of secession. Today, while we defend the right of self-determination, we do not advocate secession. Why?

NO NATIONAL SOLUTION

Many Puerto Rican workers have voted for the PNP and the PDP. This means not that they really want either statehood or commonwealth status but that they have few illusions in successful independence from imperialism on a bourgeois basis, i.e. the PIP alternative. At the same time, the 1998 strike clearly revealed their hostility toward privatization and to the imperialists they saw as its perpetrators. There is no doubt that the mass of Puerto Ricans on the island see themselves as a separate nationality from North Americans. In fact, they see many of the past "independentistas" as national heroes. Nevertheless, the prospect of independence is seen to be a disaster, since it has been framed in a completely anti-revolutionary context – that is, only in its bourgeois form. Therefore, the position of the LRP is not to advocate immediate independence but to fight for every national democratic right for Puerto Ricans, including the unconditional freedom of all political prisoners.

On the other hand, if a progressive movement toward

independence were developing, among at least an advanced layer of workers if not yet among masses, we would advocate independence ourselves and work within the movement for independence to make it strong and successful. At the same time, we would openly seek to truthfully expose the reactionary essence of nationalism and the pitfalls of a nationally limited economy in today's world. We would instead aim for a proletarian-led Puerto Rico becoming an integral part of a socialist federation of Caribbean and Latin American Workers' States.

That is, under changed circumstances, communist revolutionaries would not only defend the right of Puerto Ricans to choose independence but would actively advise such a choice. Secession is an indirect but sometimes necessary route to equality and unity of all peoples. Today, in the absence of mass sentiment for independence, revolutionaries can argue directly for the overall fight against imperialism and the need for an international working-class Bolshevik-Leninist party whose goal is socialist revolution.

PUERTO RICO CAN BE SPARK

We raise this discussion now not only for theoretical clarity. The question of national independence is bound to come to the fore for the workers' movement in Puerto Rico again in the near future. If struggles such as the fight around Vieques succeed, it is possible that workers will see independence, with all its possible dangers, as the only way to fight imperialism. That option would be most likely if the consciousness of the U.S. working class and its level of struggle remains low as compared to Puerto Rico.

In such a development, revolutionaries would make clear that we fight for independence as the best way under the given circumstances to point to proletarian socialist revolution as the real answer. A workers' Puerto Rico would immediately cancel its debts to the imperialists and expropriate their corporations without compensation. A Puerto Rican socialist revolution in the face of American imperialism would ignite oppressed peoples around the world and show them the road to liberation and to an international federation of workers' states. And of course, a Puerto Rican revolution, especially given the growing importance of not only Puerto Rican but all Latino workers in the U.S., could become a spark for revolutionary struggle on the mainland.

the U.S. mainland, support activity for Vieques has been limited to small demos and civil disobedience actions.

In Puerto Rico, now is the time to begin organizing mass actions to oppose the Navy. These include pickets and demonstrations, as well as work stoppages up to and including a renewed general strike. In the U.S., Vieques supporters must force the unions to make good on their words of support and mobilize their members for actions in defense of Vieques and Puerto Rico.

To carry out this fight against the bureaucratic misleadership of our class requires fighting to build a revolutionary party of the working class – here in the belly of the U.S. imperialist beast, in Puerto Rico and throughout the

world. Such a party must be internationalist, fighting for the right of self-determination for Puerto Rico and all oppressed nations. Such a party would fight against the program of war, exploitation and austerity – the real program of the imperialists and their agents. A victory for the people of Vieques and all of Puerto Rico would be a glorious chapter in the history of our class and the building of that party. ●

January 16

*U.S. Military Out of Vieques and All of Puerto Rico!
Self-Determination for Puerto Rico!
Re-Create the Fourth International!*

U.S. Military Out of Vieques!

by Joseph Andrews

For well over a half-century, the U.S. Navy has used Vieques, a small Puerto Rican island, for target practice. Navy exercises have severely injured residents, many of whom contracted cancer from the toxic residue of the bombings, and destroyed the ecosystem.

But after 60 years, the people of Vieques and all of Puerto Rico said "Enough!" When a civilian security guard, David Sanes, was accidentally killed last April by a bomb dropped by a Navy airplane, a popular movement arose to demand the immediate, unconditional and permanent withdrawal of the U.S. military. Justifiably angry, the people were demanding an end to the intolerable destruction of their land, their livelihood and their health.

Reacting to the pressure, a Special Commission on Vieques was established in Puerto Rico, with participation by the three main bourgeois parties there. In line with the mass sentiment, the Special Commission issued its report last summer, starting with a call for the permanent and immediate withdrawal of the Navy and a complete stop to all bombing and training in Vieques. President Clinton rejected these demands.

According to *El Nuevo Día* (January 16), Clinton remains intractable in his position that the military will remain for five years and carry out practice sessions, scheduled to recommence this spring, with inert bombs. This plan is an attempt to maintain the status quo as much as possible. It is an outright rejection of the demands of the masses of Puerto Rico. It is unacceptable.

IMPERIALISM AND PUERTO RICO

When the results of the second round of negotiations are announced, a definitive moment of confrontation between the Puerto Rican masses and U.S. imperialism may arrive. But the problem is that the on-going opposition has so far been limited to pacifist civil disobedience by only several hundred activists camped out on Vieques. Yet 50,000 people staged a demonstration at the Roosevelt Roads military base last July 4, and there were other mass protests earlier. A widespread anger against the U.S. military in Vieques pervades the outlook of the workers and poor throughout Puerto Rico. In our view, mass mobilization is possible and urgently needed. It is key to the success of the demand for a complete and immediate withdrawal.



The Vieques situation dramatically demonstrates an inescapable fact: Puerto Rico is still a colony ruthlessly dominated by North American imperialism. The U.S. military occupies not only two-thirds of Vieques but about 13 percent of all cultivable land in Puerto Rico, which is routinely occupied by at least 35,000 U.S. Army soldiers.

Puerto Rico also lacks control of other aspects of its own economic and political life. For example, Puerto Ricans can be drafted by the U.S. Army, and any of its laws can be overturned by the U.S. Congress – but residents of Puerto Rico can't vote for President and lack voting representation in the U.S. Congress. The Puerto Rican government can carry out plebiscites over the question of the island's status, supposedly to see whether the people favor statehood, commonwealth or whatever. But plebiscites are always non-binding, and Congress always gets the final say. In the eyes of their masters, colonial slaves cannot decide on the conditions of their emancipation.

U.S. capitalists control the majority of businesses in Puerto Rico and have enjoyed huge tax breaks and other financial incentives to invest there. U.S. companies extract about \$20 billion in profits per year off the backs of super-exploited Puerto Rican workers, chiefly in low-wage industries like tourism and textiles. Official unemployment in Puerto Rico is over 13 percent, more than three times higher than in the U.S. For those who can find jobs, yearly wages average \$18,000, only 60 percent of the average for mainland workers. Nevertheless, the cost of living is about 25 percent higher than in the U.S.

Ever since the recession hit Puerto Rico in the early 1970's, living standards and social services have gone down.

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