

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



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Re-Creat
the Fourth International

Stop U.S. Imperialist War on Iraq!

The U.S. is about to wage a neo-colonial imperialist war against Iraq. Bush has demanded it, Congress has approved, and the U.N. Security Council has caved in to it. Soon the decade-long bombing and starvation war will explode into an open invasion to oust Saddam Hussein and create a U.S. protectorate over the country with the world's second largest oil reserves.

"Stop the War before it Starts," say liberal peace activists. But a low-intensity war of bombing and economic sanctions has been waged ever since Bush I concluded his desert slaughter in 1991. The cost in lives in Iraq has been almost a thousand times greater than September 11. One protester's placard at the Washington anti-war demonstration on October 26 put it starkly: "U.S. 9/11 – Iraq 24/7."

This is an imperialist, criminal war. It should be opposed by all class-conscious working-class people, in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Iraq and with masses of people across the world who are outraged at the arrogance of the U.S. and its allies. The war preparations have already provoked massive protests across the world, including in the United States, where public opinion polls show much less support than for last year's war in Afghanistan. Imperialist governments in Europe are opposed; doubly so the shaky rulers in the Middle East. Yet the American war machine marches on. Why?

U.S. HYPOCRISY AND LIES

Through this long foretold war, the U.S. has offered one sham reason after another for invading Iraq.

- We are told that Saddam Hussein has developed "weapons



Over half a million demonstrators marched in Florence, Italy, on November 9, protesting the threatened U.S. war against Iraq.

of mass destruction." This charge has a kernel of truth: this brutal dictator was once a U.S. ally who was given chemicals to make poison gas when he was at war with Iran and attacking his own Kurdish population. But from the 1991 war on, Iraq has been bombed into pre-industrial backwardness. All the "evidence" supplied by the Administration's warmongers that he can produce nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction has been exposed as lies by anti-Saddam experts like the U.N.'s arms inspectors.

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LRP/COFI Report

LRP CONVENTION

The LRP held its national convention, the highest decision-making body of our organization, in early September. The convention discussed and voted on documents that will guide our work in the class struggle and in building the revolutionary party in the coming period. We outline some of the main political points here. Extended discussions of our convention documents will appear in future issues of *PR*.

International Perspectives

Our International Perspectives document began by reviewing our previous perspectives, which had very accurately predicted the main developments of the class struggle around the world. Key to our world view is our understanding that Stalinism had nothing to do with socialism. The Stalinist countries were in fact statified forms of capitalism. With this view and with our understanding that world capitalism was sliding into economic crisis following the end of the post-World War II boom, our organization stands alone in having predicted the collapse of Stalinism and its moves toward Western-style, "free-market" forms of capitalism. (See "Theories of Stalinism's Collapse" on page 29.)

We therefore understood that Stalinism would only be one casualty, as capitalism's international economic crisis expanded from the weakest sectors of the world economy to the strongest. The same crisis that broke out in the mid-1970's oil conflicts ravaged the neo-colonial "third-world" economies in the 1980's debt crisis and brought down the Stalinist economies at the end of the '80's is now tearing at the advanced imperialist economies, including that of the U.S. superpower. Far from just another cyclical downturn, the current crisis will deepen toward a catastrophic collapse akin to the 1930's.

We analyze the present period of world history following the collapse of Stalinism as being in an unstable interregnum, in which the bourgeoisie has the upper hand, thanks especially to the pro-capitalist misleadership of the working class. The capitalists

have been engaged in a hesitant offensive, needing to take back reforms gained in past struggles but fearful of attacking too provocatively and triggering a working-class explosion. However, this attack, led by the U.S., has accelerated since September 11. The interregnum is a prelude to a period of mass revolutionary uprisings. Various countries are at different stages: Argentina, for example, is gripped by a high level of class struggle with revolutionary potential in the short term (see *PR* 64), while the U.S. struggle remains low.

It is difficult to know where the next revolutionary struggles will break out, because such developments are governed not only by objective factors like economic crisis but also by subjective factors like the relative strength of reformist and revolutionary leaderships. The decisive factor shaping the current period of struggle is the absence of a genuinely revolutionary international party to guide our class's struggles.

Nevertheless, our perspectives identify a series of countries where such outbreaks of revolutionary struggle are most likely. These are countries of extreme "combined and uneven development," in which social underdevelopment – both inherited from pre-capitalist economies and reinforced by imperialism – coexists with big and relatively recent industrial development and large working classes. Such conditions drive explosive working-class struggles and provide the ruling classes with limited reformist means to incorporate the upper layers of the working class into the system. As Trotsky explained, these were decisive factors in why the Russian working class was the first to overthrow capitalism. Today we identify China, the Pacific Rim, Brazil, Argentina and other Latin American countries, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Egypt and the former Stalinist countries of the ex-USSR and Eastern European as likely sites of early revolutionary struggles.

In many of these countries, struggles for democratic rights are prominent: for national self-determination, for land to the peasants, against pre-capitalist forms of bondage and exploitation,

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How to Reach Us

LRP Central Office & New York	P.O. Box 769 New York, NY 10033 (212) 330-9017 e-mail: LRPNYC@earthlink.net website: www.LRP-COFI.org
Chicago	(773) 463-1340
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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Send to: **SV Publishing**
P.O. Box 769, Washington Bridge Station
NY, NY 10033, USA.

email: LRPNYC@earthlink.net
website: www.lrp-cofi.org

Corporate Scandals Expose War on Workers

by Dave Franklin

The collapse of Enron a year ago was the tip of an iceberg. In the ensuing months, more swindles, lies, greed and financial corruption have been exposed. The underlying economic condition of American and world capitalism has been further spotlighted, along with the moral character of those who rule it. And the resignation under fire of Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Harvey Pitt on election night pointed to the direct complicity of the U.S. government in the corporate scandals.

This whole year the ruling class proclaimed the motto, “United We Stand,” aiming to bind the country together against terrorism. But the ruling class’s own unity is above all against the working classes of the world. *They* reaped the profits off the so-called disaster relief funds after September 11, while workers were handed pink slips. *They* are clamoring for war against the working people of Iraq, a war fought by the working people of the U.S., hoping for even greater control over oil profits. And we are learning more and more about the ways they have used to swindle us.

Just as the basic characteristics of the Enron debacle have been repeated in the recent scandals, so have the excuses by the ruling class. Kozlowski, Ebbers, et al. have joined Ken Lay and his ilk as “bad apples,” a small if growing minority of capitalists who supposedly don’t play by the rules. Of all the hustles going on, this is one of the biggest.

For it is clear from what has already been revealed that corruption is rampant throughout the financial structure and threaded through the corporate system. The major banks, auditing firms, consultants, securities analysts, law firms and a slew of Fortune 500 corporations have already figured directly in the massive scams. And a far greater number are involved who haven’t been caught.

Moreover, capitalism has always been a cesspool of cheap swindles, within and outside of the capitalists’ own laws; capitalists have freely cheated the masses as well as each other. This is the inevitable practice of a system that preaches and demands the maximization of profit and vicious competition at any cost. To be sure, there is an extraordinary amount of such fraud in this period as the system decays, but its pervasiveness is by no means new.

For working people, it is most important to understand that the system itself is built on something more fundamental than theft. Those capitalists who “play by the rules” are still participants in ruthless class exploitation. All profit is created by the workers and seized by the capitalists; it is the surplus value beyond what is needed to reproduce the working class and the existing capital. Such a system is obsolete in today’s world,

when we have the potential to end poverty and class divisions. That demands a ruthless struggle against not only the particular bastards splashed across recent headlines, but the entire capitalist class and the system they represent.

FROM CORPORATE BOARDS TO WHITE HOUSE

The corporate rip-offs themselves were the inevitable results rather than the causes of the crises within the firms involved. They actually served to obscure – and ultimately deepen – grave problems that already existed. The center was the telecommunications industry, including Global Crossing and Adelphia, which have collapsed. These firms got caught up in the hi-tech boom of the ’90’s, and in a near-classic case of overproduction, woefully overestimated the demand for telecom equipment, notably fiber-optic cable.

The biggest of these firms was WorldCom, whose bankruptcy surpassed Enron’s to become the largest in history. But unlike the crooks at Enron, who employed relatively sophisticated scams, WorldCom’s founder and former CEO Bernie Ebbers was in way above his head. Acquisition after acquisition over a number of years seemed themselves proof of his business smarts and the company’s rosy prospects, despite the growing mountain of debt; such was the atmosphere in the ’90’s boom, where virtually any investment related to hi-tech and the internet seemed a sure thing. As things went sour, Ebbers turned to incredibly simplistic means to cover losses — including personal loans from company coffers and booking nearly \$4 billion of operating costs as capital expenditures. By the time the

company’s true financial state and Ebbers’ attempts at cover-up had been exposed, WorldCom’s stock valuation of \$200 billion had become almost worthless.

The scandals ranged far beyond the telecoms to include Xerox and over 150 companies who have had to restate earnings since 2001. They have engulfed American celebrities such as Martha Stewart, who was apparently willing to risk fame and fortune for a relatively piddling amount in an insider stock sell-off; and Jack Welch, the viciously anti-union former head of General Electric, whose retirement package was exorbitant even by CEO standards – without including the undisclosed terms of company jets and other perks revealed by his wife in divorce proceedings.

Jack Grubman, an analyst working for Salomon Smith Barney (a subsidiary of Citigroup), was a major player in hi-tech stocks; he reportedly raised \$100 billion in investments, largely on his reputation as an expert in the field. In fact, Grubman was



Harvey Pitt swore to tell the truth but was forced to resign when exposed for covering up corporate scandals he was supposed to police.

deeply involved in the companies he recommended and made a killing for himself and Citigroup by setting up the predictable bum steers. He was recommending buys on World Com and Global Crossing virtually up to the moment of their bankruptcy.

Two of the worst offenders who have escaped with relatively little heat are big in the Bush Administration: Vice President Cheney and Secretary of the Army Thomas White. (Bush himself was a relatively petty scam artist in the practice of insider trading with his Harken energy company.) White moved over to the Army after running what is now known to have been one of the most scandal-ridden divisions at Enron. When the story broke, the Bush Administration claimed he was not involved. This lie has been exposed, through among other things the discovery of an e-mail in which White recommended closing a big deal to hide losses. White also cashed in \$12 million in stocks as Enron was collapsing.

Cheney presided over Halliburton, one of the biggest government contractors and a big oil services dealer in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Under his watch in 1998, the firm cooked the books to boost its paper profits while a merger was being negotiated. When Halliburton sold a division, it claimed that its employees had “resigned” in order to confiscate their pensions. But when Cheney himself resigned, the terms of his contract were changed so that he could reap full retirement benefits worth \$8.5 million.

HOW TO MAKE MONEY WITHOUT WORKING

These thieves get away with looting the workers because all capitalist politicians, including the Democrats, are unwilling and fundamentally unable to take them on. For the whole political system rests on the pols’ identification with and subordination to the capitalists.

As we have noted, these scandals have their roots in the way business has been conducted in America for over two decades. By the late 1970’s, the post-war economic boom had clearly ended, profit rates had begun a long-term decline, and the ruling class felt obliged to counter stagnation with an escalating series of attacks on the working class. Through wage cuts, outsourcing, slashes in the social wage, mass layoffs, etc., the bourgeoisie succeeded in increasing its exploitation of the working class. In 1985 we described the Reagan era as the “day of the pigs”: as the systemic crisis gnawed away beneath the surface glitter, the big bourgeoisie swilled at the trough. And a few years later came the Savings & Loan swindles, in which George W.’s brother Neil and other luminaries were exposed as swindlers.

But over roughly the same period, the ruling class also instituted practices that would end up increasing the mass of fictitious values. Real value is based on underlying labor-time; but fictitious value represents a false claim on real value (for example, artificially or speculatively heightened stock prices); it is there-



AFL-CIO head John Sweeney at labor rally on Wall Street, July 2002. Sweeney called for corporate reform but relies on corporate-backed politicians, not mass working-class action.

fore a misleading indicator of economic performance. (For a fuller explanation, see the article “Enron and Capitalist Decay” in *PR* 64.) A hallmark of capitalism’s epoch of decay has been an enormous growth in fictitious value and the rise of a huge financial sector largely involved with the production of paper values. Like other sectors of capital, it seeks to maximize its share of value, and that includes a pronounced tendency to puff up paper values through hype and false claims of profits and prospects.

The capitalist class does not share Marx’s concept of value, which would be admitting to exploitation. But its more far-sighted elements realize that values must have some relationship to underlying prospects of real profitability. Indeed, the present stock market fall was set off by a huge overvaluation in stocks aggravated by scandal.

Thus in the depths of the Great Depression of the 1930’s, the bourgeois government instituted a series of regulations designed to keep the tendencies toward the creation of fictitious values under control. But in the past quarter-century, sweeping changes have been made in the name

of profits that undid many of the regulatory barriers.

Auditing firms, for example, can now cook books for companies from which they could secure more lucrative consulting fees. Banks can advise customers on buying stocks on which they can also collect a commission. And corporate executives could amass fortunes far exceeding their original salaries by finding various ways to jack up the stock price. The result has been a growing chasm of blatant conflicts of interests between profits and financial honesty.

Not only were the temptations to pull a hustle more obvious and compelling, but many of the techniques were legal, and the illegal ones were largely ignored by the regulatory agencies. There resulted an orgy of scams and inflated values that largely hid the true state of many firms. The “boom” of the 1990’s, which largely bypassed the working class, obscured the fictitious hi-jinks. But as boom gave way to bust, the real picture became harder to hide – even as executives and their friends felt even more compelled to do just that.

ECONOMY WAVERING

The wave of scandals has had a massive impact on an already fundamentally shaky economy. Masses of workers have been laid off (a half million in two years in telecom alone) and companies shut down. The stock market, which has lost about \$7 trillion in value since its peak in March 2000, continues to fall overall. Jittery investors, including foreign capital (which has propped up the dollar through its stock purchases), are withdrawing from a market they no longer trust to make easy money.

Future prospects are not good either. The stock market, despite its plunge, remains highly overvalued. Its condition is

ominously similar to the state of the stock market at the time of the crash in 1929. Likewise, the state of the U.S. economy can hardly be described as uplifting, with record corporate and personal debt, declining profit statements and rising unemployment. Its condition is in synch with a deteriorating world system. Whether or not a full-scale world depression occurs soon, the capitalist class will be obliged to attack the proletariat far harder than it has already.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

We emphasize that a real economic crisis has been a causal factor in the scandals, and it reflects a more general crisis of the system. The main problem with the system is its incapacity to develop society as a whole, not the rip-offs that permeate the behavior of its rulers. This has nothing to do with excusing the actions of the thieving scum on top as a result of "objective pressures." Quite the opposite.

The most enduring image of the scandals is that of corporate executives walking off with mountains of loot as their companies collapse and workers lose their jobs and pensions. Alexander Cockburn summed it up in the *New York Press*:

Fortune magazine reports that officers and directors of the 1035 companies that have fallen the most from their recent bull-market peaks cashed in \$66 billion worth of stock before the crash. Meanwhile those companies' non-insider employees were watching as their children's college funds and their retirement incomes were in free-fall. Before the crash executives from AOL Time Warner cashed in \$1.79 billion. Enron executives hauled off \$994 million. Global Crossing's commissars netted \$951 million.

A rat leaves a sinking ship – a reflexive act of survival. But the corporation execs saw disaster coming and had time to warn and possibly save the passengers. Instead they paused long enough to carry off more goodies, even though they are already set for life to an extent workers will never see. Their escape at the expense of others is a conscious and heinous act, unlike the basic need to live that drives the lowly rodent.

The ruling class knows it has a big, big problem, and has gone into damage control mode. It has to convince its own class members to continue investing, and to convince the masses that the system is healthy and employs some fundamental sense of justice. The basic message is the same, but it has to be pitched to two very different groups.

THE SYSTEM'S COVER-UP

A clear need here is disassociating the system and the capitalist class as a whole from the scandals. Essential to that is the media's setting up a few corporate criminals to take the rap. Tyco's former CEO L. Dennis Kozlowski is cast as a clown, using company funds for buying a \$6000 shower curtain and \$445 pin cushion. WorldCom's Ebbers is pictured as a simpleton, Martha Stewart as gossip item. Meanwhile, Bush and his cronies are left virtually untouched.

The scandals themselves are being used to prove that the system works. After all, aren't the bad guys getting exposed and caught? But in terms of how to actually fix the problems, the strategy is murkier. The capitalists form a highly cautious class, with interests and habits deeply entrenched in the existing state of affairs. They are not inclined to look beyond the tips of their noses, even when their objective interests demand it. A small number of financiers like Felix Rohatyn want to make substantive structural changes, relating to the obvious conflicts of interests. But most of Wall Street wants little change, particularly

when it comes to state enforcement.

The politicians have a greater need to show they are doing something. But the Bush Administration itself is far more interested in diverting attention from the scandals and the deepening attack on workers by building up war fever. (Like his daddy, who covered up the Savings & Loan scandal with his Gulf War, Bush sees the public relations value of imperialist aggression in the Middle East.)

Congress managed to pass, with a drum roll, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act for corporate reform legislation. Its main thrust is to force CEO's to be more creative in their denials of book-cooking. The deregulation of banking and accounting that formed much of the structural basis for the wave of scandals remains untouched. And its central plank, the creation of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, was almost immediately infected by the rot: William Webster, the former FBI and CIA head who had been brought in by Harvey Pitt to head the board, was revealed to have served on the auditing committee of a corporation charged with financial fraud.

UNION BUREAUCRATS' RESPONSIBILITY

The Democrats are doing little to distinguish themselves from the Republicans, despite the close connections between the Bush presidency and the scandals, and the higher profile the Republicans have with business. For the Democrats themselves have deep ties to business in general and the scandals in particular. They do not want the working class aroused by fiery agitation. And they have largely gone along with Bush's Iraq diversion, out of both support for it and political opportunism.

Among the major victims of these scandals have been workers laid off from collapsed companies and union members with pensions in near-valueless stock funds. Workers in the past traded wage gains for fringe benefits like pensions, health care and job protection, all of which are now going down the drain. So the unions should be obligated to mobilize a mass protest and defense against corporate corruption and attacks.

But while AFL-CIO President John Sweeney called for a "grass roots" campaign, this has meant in practice scattered demonstrations useful only for photo-ops. Instead the bureaucrats look to their favored legal and legislative tactics: shareholder lawsuits, tougher penalties against corporate criminals, and "reforms" like putting union officials on corporate boards.

The labor bureaucracy had no business getting union members in this mess to begin with. In all too many cases they allowed employers to reduce payments into their members' pension funds, swallowing the line that the stock market boom would provide manna for all in the end. In one alleged case, the heads of a union insurance company (ULLICO) cut an insider deal with officials of Global Crossing: they got windfalls at the expense of the workers' pension funds and cashed out like corporate execs when the fund sank.

The ruling class has tripped over its own feet. It tapped raw emotion in the working class over corruption and larger questions of class and social oppression. Some of the political capital gained by the ruling class in the wake of September 11 has been squandered, as they have compromised themselves and their system in front of the masses.

Playing dirty, here and abroad, is a way of life for corporations and capitalist governments. There are no lasting solutions through business-as-usual collective bargaining. Political confrontation with the capitalists and their state is necessary. It can only end with a revolutionary seizure of state power by the working class.●

Class War on the Docks

As we go to press, an agreement between the leaders of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Pacific Maritime Association bosses has been reached on the key issue in their dispute, the introduction of new job-displacing technologies. While the union bureaucracy claims a victory, preliminary reports indicate that management got almost everything it wanted.

A concerted attack has been launched by the ruling class against labor under the cover of the current patriotic war hype. The Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), the arm of West Coast shipping owners and port operators, is aiming to cripple the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and its 10,500 workers in a major contract struggle. This attack is being directly backed by major retailing firms. It also has the active connivance of the Bush administration – and the quiet approval of the Democrats. The far-reaching and alarming scope of the attack demands a determined defense from not only the ILWU but from the working class as a whole.

At the moment, the struggle is being framed by the conditions of the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act. Workers at all 29 West Coast ports are back on their job during a “cooling off” period. This was a result of President Bush’s court order, as part of Taft-Hartley proceedings, to end a lockout imposed by the PMA. The court’s terms are highly favorable to management: workers and the union are subject to fines and prosecutions if it is determined that they are not working according to “normal” productive levels. This is what the Maritime bosses and their President, Joseph Miniace, wanted all along.

Bush made an attempt to pose his actions as a rational measure to stanch economic hemorrhaging as a result of the port closings. To be sure, the American economy was taking a hit of at least hundreds of millions of dollars a day during the port closings, since industrial and agricultural goods could not be exported, railways were shut down, and factories used to a limited supply inventory with “just in time” production were beginning to idle as the flow of needed parts dried up. It shows what happens when a small but strategic section of workers stops working: the ILWU handles over 40 percent of the U.S.’s sea-borne cargo. Revolutionary Marxists have always pointed out that the power of the working class is not just in its numbers but in its ability to halt profit-driven production and society itself in its tracks.

In the present confrontation, many major importers had stocked up on goods in preparation for a shutdown. But this didn’t prevent big retailers like Wal-Mart, Nike and others, sensing the chance to impose a major defeat on the working class, from howling about the need for Taft-Hartley. And it was the PMA’s

intransigence that created the lockout and its continuation, knowing they could get Bush’s backing.

BUSH AND BOSSES’ UNION-BUSTING

In the wake of September 11 and the continuing “war on evil,” the capitalist class and its state have rushed to use the opportunity to reinvigorate their assault on the beleaguered U.S. working class, its jobs, its health and pension benefits and its working conditions. Since the labor bureaucrats have continually capitulated, the bosses have seized the opportunity to further cripple the unions, particularly strategically located ones like the ILWU with a militant history and a combative workforce.

A top labor official, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, summed up the swirl of events quite accurately:

This is the first time in the history of the United States that a president has let an employer lock out workers in an extended quest to undermine the workers’ union – creating a phony crisis – and then reward that employer’s action with government intervention. It is a tragedy with historic ramifications.

The PMA made clear from the outset of contract talks months ago that it was seeking a crippling defeat of the union. Its hardball tactics led to the expiration of the old contract in July without agreement. In the ensuing negotiations it was openly provocative, as when Miniace walked into a negotiation session with armed bodyguards.

Workloads and safety violations began piling up. The PMA instituted the lockout in September, using work slowdowns as an excuse. It then refused a 30-day extension of the old contract which Bush’s own mediator proposed (and the union agreed to), demanding a 90-day version it knew the union would reject.

Unlike many sectors of capital, the maritime bosses are making good profits, although they aim to take advantage of the overall economic climate of crisis. The main issues in this particular contract fight were not wage or health-care takebacks but a series of automated innovations (including one that is a creation of an ILWU member) that will replace hundreds of union jobs in a tightening job market.

In a society ruled by workers, technological innovations in production will lead to greater social wealth shared by all. Workers would work fewer hours and with less strain without losing income. But under capitalism and especially in these times, workers rightfully fear that productivity advances will send them to the unemployment lines or enforced speed-up. And in a clear attempt to undermine union strength on the docks, the bosses are demanding in addition that the automation-based jobs be non-union.

It is clear that the PMA, Bush and the retailers have had their



forces joined for some time, if they did not actually pre-orchestrate the chain of events. And they will remain joined as the struggle continues. The bosses own the state like they own industry.

A Bush administration task force met with port operators and retailers in the spring in anticipation of the struggles. In the summer, the government floated a variety of measures to punish union actions, including using military personnel as scabs. Homeland Security chief Tom Ridge called ILWU leader James Spinosa to warn him that a union-initiated work stoppage would be injurious to the country. Later, with the corporate lockout in full force, Bush instituted the first Taft-Hartley proceedings as mediated talks were occurring. Naturally, he briefed business leaders (and not union tops) before seeking his court order. And in explaining his actions, Bush further invoked patriotic demagoguery, warning of military as well as economic damage.

LEADERSHIP UNDERMINES ILWU MILITANCY

The bosses are taking on a union with a proud militant history. The ILWU was born in powerful class explosions in the 1930's, above all the San Francisco general strike of 1934. Even today its traditions and sense of union history stand out. Its workforce now has a large Black and Latino component and it has a keen sense of its strategic potential power.

But militant rhetoric aside, the union leadership has been undermining the strength and spirit of the union by its conduct of the struggle. Since it was clearly facing powerful and calculating adversaries, the union needed a defensive strategy. This should have included actively seeking militant support from other workers. But the leadership did not try to have other unions mobilized, although many workers, especially on the West Coast, have shown that they are aware of the stakes involved in the attack on the ILWU.

Further, the leaders signaled to the bosses that they would meet them more than halfway. A serious strike threat was never advanced even though the ranks were fighting mad. Spinosa reinforced Bush's patriotic hammer with his own declaration that "our obligation to this country and to our military effort is one that we will not move from." And the leadership has agreed to the sacrifice of 600 clerks' jobs that the new technology would displace, in exchange for union jurisdiction.

Technological change in production has always been a feature of capitalism, even though the system has suppressed many innovations. Innovations that increase profits and oppress the workers further are inevitable; unions can mount rear-guard actions to preserve jobs, through mass united actions. But this requires a real fight, and even a union with the ILWU's militant rank and file has seen its share of capitulations over this central issue.

In the late 1960's and early '70's, ILWU leader Harry Bridges agreed to sweeping new technologies around "containerization" which reduced the workforce and union membership to a small fraction of its peak of 100,000. His sop was to retain the remaining jobs in the union and keep job distribution through the hiring hall. Bridges had been a militant leader of



Oakland, California longshoremen block port entrance during bosses' lockout.

struggles in the 1930's. He was heavily red-baited because of his ties to the Stalinized Communist Party, but he never embraced revolutionary politics. His own reformism, along with the increasing conservatism of the labor leadership in the post-war era, made him another crusty bureaucrat who came to be viewed with disdain by many labor militants. The ILWU bureaucrats who followed him did nothing to discourage the bosses' appetites for more concessions.

But the PMA's latest demand that the newly-created jobs be non-union was a direct threat to the union, and therefore to the leaders' own positions as brokers for labor power. As ILWU spokesman Steve Stallone declared: "When the companies say they don't want our members doing these new jobs, it's like saying they want the union to disappear too." And management's threats and the deteriorating work conditions fanned the already-growing anger among the rank and file.

So the Spinosa leadership finally balked at this demand. They resisted authorizing legal job actions after the old contract expired, gave in under pressure from the ranks. Such actions included observance of safety rules of the Pacific Coast

Maritime Code, a wise step in itself given that five workers had died in the last year on the job. The PMA cited such elementary safety practices as an excuse for locking out the workers.

UNION LEADERS PUSH ANTI-WORKER DEMOCRATS

So evident is the threat to the whole trade union movement that even James Hoffa of the Teamsters (who has been flirting with the Republicans and Bush) came out vehemently against the administration's actions. But the labor leadership as a whole has shared in undermining the dockworkers' struggle. The AFL-CIO tops under John Sweeney's "progressive" leadership have complained about the attacks and the Bush administration's support for them. But their answer is to urge support for the Democrats rather than building a militant class defense. They talked of a more energized get-out-the-vote effort in November.

The Democratic Party represents not labor but another political wing of the ruling class. They play "soft cop" to the Republicans' "hard cop." Their biggest service to capital has been to pretend to be an alternative to working-class political independence and class militancy; their pro-labor posture allows them to be more able to carry out attacks. The last president to invoke the reactionary Taft-Hartley law against workers was Democrat Jimmy Carter – in 1978 against the coal miners. Leading Democrats like California Senator Dianne Feinstein actively supported the new imposition of Taft-Hartley.

The bureaucrats support the soft cops rather than mobilize a rank and file that could get out of hand. Since the Democrats will not help them in the current situation, they knuckled under to Bush and retreated in the face of the government edict. They have entered into forced negotiations, playing with dice they admit are loaded against them. The constant threat that Bush will use troops to scab and to quell any militant disruption or response to Taft-Hartley hangs over the scene.

UNITED LABOR ACTION NEEDED

Despite the forces arrayed against the longshoremen, the situation can still be turned around. But the dead-end strategy of accommodating to the bosses and the government has to be swept aside.

As an absolute minimum, the line has to be held on making all jobs union jobs and keeping their distribution through the hiring hall: no layoffs and job losses through attrition. This means that there must be creative use of the technology issues; for example, demanding that any workers displaced by the new technologies be maintained in other capacities. Preparations must be made for strike action, and other workers should actively support the ILWU defense. Unions should be mobilized for mass demonstrations at every port, for example. An ILWU representative at a New York City Labor Against the War conference in October announced confidently that this was in the works:

The Bay Area labor movement has already put the PMA and government on notice that were they to militarize the ports, the entire labor movement would respond and that response would be decisive and dramatic. San Francisco and Oakland are both cities in which general strikes occurred in 1934 and 1946 respectively. ... This is one circumstance where history could well repeat itself. While they have not said so in so many words, the Teamsters and both Alameda and San Francisco labor councils are likely to see this declaration of war on labor as a basis for calling general strikes and other forms of militant resistance. (NYCLAW e-mail Digest, Nov. 5.)

The ILWU leadership must be taken at its word and forced to go to the other West Coast unions with plans for a general

strike if troops are sent in to scab.

But more is necessary. The entire trade union membership has been attacked. The use of Taft-Hartley and the threat of troops is a frontal blow. The working class is already under assault; the recession threatens to break out into a massive depression. Unemployment is worsening; "consumer confidence" – that is, the outlook of the hugely indebted working class – is plummeting. Anger and frustration are eating away at the patriotic pap constantly fed to American workers, and the war drums are receiving less than an enthusiastic hearing. Militancy is now regenerating.

Now, on top of all the accumulated frustration, the ruling class is lashing out against some of the most militant unions. Domesticating union bureaucrats is no longer enough for the bosses, as the economic crisis takes a huge bite out of profit rates. Strategic unions have to be humbled and kneecapped; the simultaneous attacks on the ILWU on the West Coast and the Transport Workers Union in New York is no accident. The bourgeoisie doesn't need a conspiracy, just its own class sense that now is the time to inflict a stinging defeat on the workers.

The bosses cannot be allowed to get away with this slap in our face. The whole AFL-CIO leadership should have threatened the administration before it acted that it would use all its resources to defend workers from attack. It should have threatened a general strike. The ILWU workers cannot be allowed to stand against Washington and the bosses alone.

Labor's ranks rightfully mistrust the union misleadership, and their conduct in this struggle has done nothing to change such feelings. But the bureaucrats nonetheless preside over the only existing mass organizations of the working class. Revolutionaries place demands for action on them without implying any illusions in them; our demands are meant to stress the power of the workers and to force the bureaucrats to put up or shut up. Even if they are forced to act, we tell our fellow workers that these demagogues will use any opportunity to sell out the struggle, since they are materially wedded to the capitalist system.

Moreover, we make clear that in our view a general strike will not only show the workers their class power but also lay the basis for socialist revolution, the only real solution to the horrors capitalism imposes on us. We openly state that the only leadership our class can trust is that of its own revolutionary party, which we call upon all other advanced workers to join us in building in the course of struggle.

We urge all workers to support the ILWU, regardless of their views on the war drive against Iraq and the "war on terrorism" in general. But as revolutionists we will constantly show the connection between the attacks on dock workers, all U.S. workers and the war in the Middle East. A massive industrial struggle will do more to prevent the coming war than all the middle-class pacifist rhetoric. The bosses and their state are the chief enemy of workers everywhere, and their attacks will only stop once they are forced out of power.●

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Palestinian Mass Struggle: Enemies Within and Without

by Joseph Andrews

As we write, the Palestinian people are still facing a ferocious attack by the Israeli military (IDF) throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The attack has made itself felt in the daily lives of every Palestinian – through draconian curfews and



Davids vs. Goliath: Palestinian boys throwing rocks at Israeli tanks near Nablus.

sieges, random shootings, shellings and bombings, and a profound deepening of the poverty of the Palestinian masses. The masses' dire conditions helped provoke a new round of mass demonstrations and strike action in September, reviving the intifada. In the months since, mass struggle has taken some backward steps, confronted with the continued grinding effects of the occupation.

In particular, pogroms by Zionist settlers on the West Bank against peasants attempting to harvest their crops display the ongoing cruelty of Israel's colonial-settler project. A recent spate of shootings and bombings at the settlers, who are a well-armed, fascistic strike force aimed at Palestinian civilians, gave a pretext for an intensified crackdown by the IDF and contributed to renewed squabbling among the Zionist rulers over strategies for suppressing the intifada.

Suppress it they must, for their interests demand it. As a combined result of the intifada and the growing international economic crisis, Israel faces an aggravation of its perennial budget problems. The stability of its own imperialist capital depends upon the extension of credit and aid on incredibly preferential terms by the U.S., which it earns through its role as junior partner, policing the Middle East to defend the U.S.'s dominance. The intifada's continuation poses a threat.

INTIFADA STYMIED IMPERIALIST PLANS

In March and April of this year, the intifada did what no one had thought possible: it brought U.S. imperialism's rampages to a temporary halt. Palestinian resistance to Israel's re-occupation of the cities and refugee camps on the West Bank, and the mass demonstrations that it inspired in neighboring states, forced the

leaders of the Arab states to noisily claim to oppose the U.S.'s planned invasion of Iraq. (See "For Arab Workers' Revolution to Smash Israeli/U.S. Terror!" in *PR* 64.) Without a prospective base of operations and an Arab cover, U.S. imperialism had to confront its first significant obstacle since last year's terrorist attacks.

With U.S. war plans against Iraq escalating once more (see page 1), both the Iraqi and the Palestinian peoples now face a worse situation. In the intervening months, many Arab rulers did their best to shift toward accommodation with the U.S.'s war plans. The breathing space necessary for this move was provided by a lengthy retreat of the intifada, which was being stifled not only by Israel's attacks but by internal sabotage by many of the forces which claimed to lead it. Its revival – in a more effective working-class-led form – is crucial to the future of the fight against imperialism in the Middle East, and is a litmus test for leaderships and programs.

Up against Israel's heavily armed soldiers, tanks, fighter planes and attack helicopters, provided and bankrolled by the U.S., the Palestinians' room for maneuver has been greatly diminished. This is no surprise; one must expect imperialists to act like imperialists. The leadership of any struggle has to know how to adapt to the conditions imposed by oppression, and can be judged accordingly. For example, during the previous intifada (1987-1992), Palestinians were living under constant, unremitting occupation, but were nevertheless able to maintain a high level of mass mobilization. Yet the leadership on the ground remained tied to the PLO, and so their efforts were pacified by the now-discredited Oslo accords.

Today, much of the established Palestinian leadership, associated in various degrees with the Fatah organization, seeks a return to some form of the collaboration with Israel that existed under the provisions of Oslo. This is only possible if the Palestinian leadership keeps a lid on mass movements. Yet from Israel's perspective, if their army can do a better job of policing the Palestinians than can Yasser Arafat & Co., the Palestinian leadership is largely superfluous. The leaders have had to try to place themselves at the head of the movement in order to defend themselves from Israeli attack, but they are more afraid of what might result from any mass movement. Sabotage of the struggle by the Palestinian Authority (PA), or what little remains of it, is a major factor in the Palestinian masses' crisis of leadership.

BUSH'S GREEN LIGHT TO ISRAEL

The U.S. ruling class recognizes, in its own way, that there is a "problem" with the Palestinian leadership. For them, the problem is that Arafat is incapable of ensuring sufficient submission to imperialism by the Palestinians. Bush's speech contained the usual quota of appeals for "reform," "transparency" and "democracy" that the U.S. employs to present itself as a friend to all the world's peoples. Yet the U.S. never minded corruption, secrecy and authoritarianism from the PA and Arafat, so long as the many security agencies were doing the job delegated to them under Oslo – stamping out Palestinian resistance. It was only when they seemed incapable of putting a stop to the intifada that Bush saw fit to recommend that the Palestinians "elect new leaders"

and make sure that they are acceptable to Israel and the U.S.

Bush's speech on June 24, at the beginning of Israel's latest invasion of West Bank cities, was widely interpreted as a green light to the Israeli government to do as it pleased, especially when it came to Arafat. Nevertheless, the U.S., in order to help preserve illusions that it serves as some kind of arbiter, has repeatedly "warned" Israel not to directly harm Arafat.

It is not surprising that, in all these months, even with ample force and opportunity, Israel has neither killed Arafat nor forced him into exile, despite all the warnings and widespread speculation that this is what they want. In chess, one never actually kills the opponent's king; one simply maneuvers him into a situation where, under threat of death, he can make no moves. That is called checkmate. Despite the evident contempt in which Bush and Sharon hold Arafat, he is still useful to them, as they seek to checkmate not just Arafat but the Palestinian people he uses as pawns.

ISRAEL'S ATROCITIES

Even though the explicit content of Bush's speech was "Arafat must go," all that has gone has been what little remained of Palestinians' basic freedoms and living standards. The U.N., in its role of high hypocrisy, has pointed out that over half of all Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are facing malnutrition. Fields lie fallow and destroyed as soldiers keep farmers out for "security" reasons. Workers go without wages for months at a time, unable to go to their jobs even in the next town because of the "closures." Even garbage disposal goes untended under the Israeli gun, increasing the risk of epidemics of infectious disease. Each Palestinian city, town and refugee camp has been reduced to a slum.

Over and above these persistent threats to the health and lives of Palestinians hovers the ever present threat of violent death. On July 22, a U.S.-provided Israeli F-16 fighter jet fired a missile into a crowded apartment building, with the stated intention of killing Salah Shehadeh, commander of the Qassam Brigades associated with Hamas. It leveled an entire block, killing Shehadeh and eight children. Sharon pronounced it "a great success," with the agreement of all his cabinet members. Then, on August 29, an Israeli Army unit shelled a Bedouin encampment in an isolated corner of the Gaza Strip, killing four people. Over the following month, over fifty Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops, as individuals or in small groups, in a series of comparatively quiet incidents, while the intifada remained suppressed.

The purpose of these atrocities is to grind down and terrorize the Palestinians. In a political context where a majority of the Israeli population is friendly to the idea of one form or another of "transfer," i.e., the final ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from territories occupied by Israel, this can have an insidious effect. The Israeli ruling class is not presently carrying out this particular genocidal policy. But the ground for a possible future resort to it is being prepared: logistically, through the starvation and terrorization of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza; juridically, through the Interior Ministry's recent claim of the power to strip citizenship from Palestinians within Israel proper, and the Supreme Court's confirmation of the government's right to carry out population transfers for "security" reasons; and politically, through a recent escalation in the Israeli media's hysteria over the "demographic threat" that Jews may soon be a minority in Palestine once again.

In addition to laying the groundwork for extending the genocidal logic of the Zionist enterprise, Israel's attacks serve a short-



Gaza Strip, November 2002. Israeli soldier guards Palestinian workers near the body of a Palestinian fighter charged with killing two Israeli settlers.

term purpose. Its attempts to crush the intifada militarily serve a secondary aim of temporarily bolstering Arafat's stature. Any potential alternate leader who seemed able to win a substantial local base of support has been arrested, deported or killed. And particularly in moments like the present, when Arafat suffers the effects of the Israeli attack, thousands, including those who were disenchanted with him, unite in his defense.

MASS MOBILIZATION NEEDED

In coming out for demonstrations in defiance of the Israeli curfews, as happened in a thousands-strong mass march in Ramallah on September 22, Palestinians have shown great courage. Unfortunately, such events have been the exception rather than the rule for most of the present intifada, which has been characterized less by mass action and more by small-group armed attacks than the previous intifada. There have been fewer strikes and demonstrations and far more commando actions directed against soldiers and settlers, as well as suicide bombings within Israel itself.

In part, this is a result of setbacks that the Palestinians suffered during the Oslo period. During the previous intifada, general strikes – embracing both Palestinians inside Israel and those who commuted from the West Bank and Gaza to jobs in Israel – cut economic output by as much as one-third. As a result, Israeli capitalists have consciously followed a strategy of reducing their dependence on "Arab labor," in favor of new immigrants and guest workers from the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. In the current intifada, before Palestinian workers could test their strength with the general strike tactic, they found themselves victimized by a general lockout tactic, in the form of the closures. Periodic general strikes have been called by trade union leaders aligned with Arafat's Fatah, most recently in response to the siege of the Ramallah compound, but their impact on the Israeli economy is difficult to estimate against the overall impact of the costs associated with the intifada and its suppression.

The desire of many young Palestinians to strike blows at the oppressor was a predictable, and in itself progressive, step in the struggle. During the Oslo years, some young fighters took advantage of the inefficiencies and contradictions of Arafat's

security apparatus to arm themselves in preparation for the next uprising. Rather than present themselves as sacrifices to superior Israeli force, armed only with stones, they wanted to be able to shoot back.

Nevertheless, elitist manipulations of the healthy desire to fight back led to nationalist and Islamist strategies which helped make Israel's job easier. Despite the heroic efforts of fighters like those in Jenin to defend themselves and take enemy soldiers with them, as a rule it is easier for the more heavily armed power to take out such small armed groups than to suppress an armed mass movement. Arms are not the answer in themselves, but are best used as an adjunct and a means of self-defense for a growing uprising of the masses themselves. A people that never takes up arms in self-defense will never be free. But any leadership that arrogates to itself the sole right to action instead of arming the masses is responsible for setting up the masses and ultimately themselves for slaughter.

NATIONALIST LEADERSHIPS

None of the major nationalist leaderships of the intifada – whether secular, like Fatah, or Islamist, like Hamas – has openly come out against mass action. To do so would be politically suicidal. However, the armed actions they have chosen, particularly suicide bombings directed against Israeli civilian targets, are not simply mis-aimed. They are calculated to encourage passivity and a cult of martyrdom, in place of encouraging the masses' confidence in their own ability to struggle. The recent turn of Fatah leaders toward calling strikes and demonstrations is motivated by the obvious impotence of other strategies – whether the diplomatic begging by elements associated with the PA or the small-group armed actions of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades – against the ferociousness of the Israeli assault. Above all else, Fatah leaders fear being discredited with the Palestinian masses, and therefore seek to be able to turn their already limited appeals for mass struggle on and off at their convenience.

Whatever their political differences, the dominant political currents in the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois Palestinian leadership accept a counterposition between mass action and armed action, and implicitly prefer a non-mass approach. Yet a reversal of the preference is no alternative. This is the choice of the Palestinian People's Party (PPP, former Stalinists). With several elected representatives in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), a presence in the apparatus of Palestinian trade unions, and a track record of grassroots leadership in the previous intifada, the PPP is not an insignificant organization, and its role in the present intifada merits examination.

For example, in response to Israel's invasion of Tulkarem in January, the first step in the re-occupation of West Bank cities, the PPP called upon the masses "to return to the activities of the greater intifada" by the following methods:

Breaking the curfew that is imposed by the occupation troops in the quarters and cities that are being reoccupied. Going out in peaceful marches and organizing various sit-ins and other activities that affirm our clinging to our national goals and demand the evacuation of the occupation army, administration, settlers from the Palestinian lands. (Statement, January 12.)

Despite the PPP's support among sectors of the Palestinian population, as far as we can tell no Palestinians followed its recommendations. And with good reason. Passive resistance in the form of curfew-breaking and sit-ins, in the face of a heavily armed and blood-thirsty opponent, is a recipe for victimhood. To stipulate ahead of time that a march will be "peaceful" is to

promise that it will neither pose a threat nor defend itself from attack. It is practically an invitation to the Israeli Army to terrorize at will. It is only fitting then, that even today, the PPP continues to push a utopian demand for imperialist institutions like the U.N. to "bring the Israeli war criminals to international courts and provide the Palestinian people with international protection." (Statement, August 23.)

Marches and other forms of mass action are necessary to demonstrate to Israel and the U.S. that the intifada has not been defeated. Their revival is a welcome development. But if Israel can repress them with impunity, the masses will be atomized once more. Defending the intifada requires the clandestine political and logistical preparation of a workers' militia to enable mass armed self-defense, in place of both the elitism that encourages passivity, and pacifist illusions that feed on that passivity. Under the current situation, that could only be accomplished by a revolutionary proletarian leadership.

PA/FATAH SABOTAGE CONTINUES

In fact, the political forces with the readiest access to both mass organization and to arms are those which have been most actively engaged in sabotaging the intifada. An ever-shifting constellation of figures within the administration of the Palestinian Authority and Fatah, both still headed by Arafat, vie for the scraps of power left by Israel.

Until the latest attack on his compound, Arafat's deputies had been negotiating with the Israeli government, army and politicians to put a stop to the intifada and then, maybe, a few months from now, the worst outrages of the occupation as well. Sari Nusseibeh, the Jerusalem representative of the PLO, has been meeting with Ami Ayalon, the former head of the Shin Bet secret police, to claim a mandate to forego the Palestinian right of return and self-determination in exchange for a few scraps of land as a "state." Arafat's advisor, Mohammed Dahlan, who was formerly in charge of cracking down on Hamas rivals in Gaza, has sought to revive high-level contacts with the Israeli government. Dahlan's replacement in Gaza and the new interior minister for the PA as a whole, Abdel Razak Yehiyeh, had a bit more success, negotiating a "Gaza first" plan for withdrawal with Ben-Eliezer; yet this collapsed after the shelling "accident" in August.

These people have little popularity and, apart from a few cops, no independent base. So long as Arafat remains under attack from Israel, he retains his popularity, and his deputies can use that to maintain their authority – even when making such widely reviled sell-outs. His reserve of support had been drying up as a result of their actions, as manifested in a rebellion of Fatah deputies in the PLC. As he has done so many times before, in threatening Arafat with physical death, Ariel Sharon has helped preserve his political life.

Yet even the most radical of Fatah leaders share the perspective of a "two-state solution" – that is, a more or less "generous" revival of the Oslo-created Bantustan, as well as collaboration with Israel. An instructive example is that of Marwan Barghouti, a political leader of Fatah in the West Bank who was arrested by Israel and is now being tried on bogus charges of "orchestrating" the intifada. On the contrary, Barghouti repeatedly called upon militants of the Al-Aqsa Brigades to confine their attacks on Israeli soldiers and settlers to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in order to graphically demonstrate their support for a constricted Palestinian "state." Revolutionaries do not recognize the right of the murderous Israeli state to stand in judgment over any Palestinian, and we defend Barghouti as a symbol of the struggle of the masses,

demanding the dropping of all charges. But we also warn the Palestinians that he does not represent a real alternative to Arafat in the struggle to realize the right of self-determination.

WORKING-CLASS ALTERNATIVE

None of the supposedly “realistic” schemes for “peace” with Israel can begin to address the material needs of working-class Palestinians. Water resources, crucial to any kind of economic development, remain under Israel’s firm control. The theft of Palestinian lands by Israel resulted in a massive and growing population of refugees and their descendants, over six million strong, most of whom lead immiserated lives. Their conditions cannot be addressed without the unrestricted right of Palestinians to return. A Palestinian mini-state, even if by some miracle it were established on the whole of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and not mere scraps, would remain at Israel’s mercy economically and militarily – a concentration camp of cheap labor to be superexploited at the hands of the Zionist bourgeoisie.

The Palestinian situation is a sharp confirmation of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution; in the imperialist epoch, the democratic rights of the oppressed masses at large, and the social needs of the working class in particular, are inextricably intertwined, and can only be addressed through a socialist revolution

led by the working class.

Despite the obstacles, the Palestinian working class does have the capacity to challenge the bourgeois nationalists, both left and right, for leadership of the intifada. If they do, it would set an example for workers throughout the region. The Palestinian working class has been weakened by the closures and occupations, and the Palestinian masses as a whole are overwhelmingly outgunned by the U.S.-backed Israelis. But their struggles have already sparked mass unrest in other Arab countries. General strikes against the bourgeois Arab dictators and princes could open possibilities for an international working-class struggle against Zionism, imperialism and capitalist exploitation, and begin a revolutionary wave leading to the defeat of imperialism and all its pawns.●

Long Live the Intifada!

For Mass Armed Self-Defense Against Israeli Terror!

*Self-Determination for Palestine:
All of Israel is Occupied Territory!*

For a Workers’ Socialist Palestine!

For a Socialist Federation of the Middle East!

Spartacist Chauvinism on Immigration, Palestine

The Spartacist League (SL) is angry at the article in our last issue which explains why we have dropped the slogan “Open the Borders.” We pointed out that the slogan is often confused with eliminating borders, a utopian fantasy under imperialist capitalism. We adopted instead the more precise slogan, “End All Restrictions on Immigrants and Refugees.”

We also observed that the SL, along with the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) and the Internationalist Group (IG) that descend from them, oppose the slogan on chauvinist grounds: they are against ending all immigration restrictions by imperialist powers. We quoted from a *Workers Vanguard* article in 1974, making an argument which the Spartacists have repeated often since then:

However, on a sufficiently large scale, immigration flows could wipe out the national identity of the recipient countries. ... Unlimited immigration as a principle is incompatible with the right to national self-determination
(*Workers Vanguard*, Jan. 18, 1974.)

And we commented:

That is, a tide of poor proletarians from third world countries endangers the “national identity” of the advanced capitalist countries. This is obviously a cover-up for a national chauvinist position. The SL and its offspring defend the right to self-determination of the imperialist U.S. – which means the suppression of the national rights of people across the globe. Communists, in contrast, defend resisters and refugees against imperialism. As framed by the Bolsheviks, the right to self-determination distinguishes between oppressed and oppressors.

This, the Spartacists retort in the August 9 *Workers Vanguard*, is “slander” that distorts their article. The LRP, they say, is a “slimy centrist outfit.” But a closer look at the article shows just who is up to their necks in slime, as well as who the centrists are.

To refute the charge of imperialist chauvinism, the SL claims

that its article showed concern for the rights of oppressed peoples. They point out that it cited the “trampling of Palestinian national rights by the massive immigration of Jewish refugees into Palestine” and the threat that an open border would have to Mexico’s economy. They add, “Above all, as dishonest polemicists, the LRP omits the central point of our article, that the call to ‘open the borders’ is ‘tantamount to advocating the abolition of national states under capitalism.’” The SL also claims that our new slogan “End All Restrictions on Immigrants and Refugees” is only a “rewording” of “Open the Borders.”

True, the WV article did note that Jewish immigration to Palestine trampled on Palestinian self-determination – more on that in a moment. As for Mexico, the article in question shows that they are offended by Mexican immigration into the U.S., not U.S. immigration to Mexico. For it warns that

... an “open” U.S./Mexico border would not only introduce impoverished Mexican laborers to flood the U.S. labor market, becoming an unprotected pool for capitalist super-exploitation, but would also lead to well-financed American “colonists” buying up Mexican enterprises and real estate.

The image of Mexican workers “flooding” the U.S. echoes the rantings of racists. As for their concern about the Mexican economy, the imperialists don’t need open borders or immigration laws to superexploit workers there; they have done so all along. Raising the issue of migrant capital is an evasion by the Spartacists to justify a line that implies bans on migrant workers. They explain their attitude further:

If, for example, there were unlimited immigration into Northern Europe, the population influx from the Mediterranean basin would tend to dissolve the national identity of small countries like Holland and Belgium.

Shed a tear for the imperialists! Belgium and the Netherlands are small, but their colonialist ruling classes looted

Indonesia and the Congo. Today Belgian and Dutch capital share in the imperialist superexploitation of the ex-colonies that drives masses into poverty and compels them to seek jobs in the countries of their imperial masters. In 1938 Trotsky observed that Czechoslovakia “is a small country and in the event of war her existence would be directly threatened.” But it was nevertheless an imperialist country that communists should not defend in wartime. (*Writings* 1937-38.) In contrast with Trotsky’s clarity, the Spartacist formulation blurs the crucial distinction between the imperialist and oppressed countries and therefore disguises an imperialist-chauvinist position.

Troubled by the obvious implications of their line, the 1974 Spartacists insisted that they did not support the immigration policies of bourgeois states. They wrote:

It would be impermissible, for example, for a communist parliamentary fraction to vote for any immigration quotas, even “liberal” ones, in a bourgeois parliament. Instead, they would vote against all racially and nationally discriminatory immigration quotas, pointing out that the real answer to concerns about “protecting jobs” is united international working-class action and socialist revolution.

Whichever Spartacist wrote the last half-sentence ought to have a word with the one who fretted so foully about the “flood” of “unprotected” Mexican immigrants.

But this whole passage is a dodge. Since the Spartacists oppose “unlimited immigration” as an unprincipled violation of national rights of the imperialist as well as the oppressed countries, they can only be for keeping excessive numbers of immigrants out. It is no excuse that they object to “discriminatory” quotas: *any* barrier to immigrants is discriminatory against non-natives and, in the imperialist countries, will be used chiefly against the darker-skinned.

The Spartacists and their ilk often state that they stand for the rights of any immigrant who manages to get across an imperialist

border. For example, the IG defends “the right of anyone who has reached Dutch territory to remain here.” (*The Internationalist* No. 14.) But their logic implies that they will stand at the borders and help keep immigrants out if too many arrive.

Preventing “unlimited immigration” indeed means erecting guns and walls at the borders. The Spartacists openly endorsed such methods a few years afterward when they defended the Berlin Wall by which East Germany’s Stalinist rulers imprisoned workers and shot those trying to get out. The 1974 article correctly observes that “The Stalinists’ systematic disregard for and denial of individual liberties is a complete perversion of the Marxist program for the dictatorship of the proletariat.” On this question the 1974 Spartacists should have a word with their subsequent selves.

The gulf between the imperialist states and those they victimize is not just a matter of economic standing. It means that revolutionary communists side with the oppressed nation in every conflict with their oppressors. In particular, we apply the right of national self-determination to the oppressed nation and not to the oppressor when these are in conflict, as in the territory of Palestine (which includes Israel) today.

The Spartacists claim to support the democratic rights of both the oppressors and the oppressed. But that inevitably means defending the oppressors’ status quo. In our last issue, we noted that they use the slogan of self-determination to defend the preservation of Israel, a racism-based state erected on stolen land which enforces apartheid-like conditions and worse on the Palestinians of the “occupied territories.” So we surmised that the SL would not support the Palestinians’ “right of return” to their homeland. This “slander” they have chosen not to answer.

And it is clear why. To defend the right of return would threaten to “wipe out the national identity of the recipient country” – Israel. For imperialist chauvinists, when the rights of the oppressed and the oppressor conflict, guess who wins.●

Kashmir: From Paradise to Hell

by A. Holberg

When you leave the Jawarhar Tunnel, which cuts through the 3700-meter high Banihal mountains linking the rest of India with the federal state of Jammu and Kashmir, at the point where



Indian security forces stand guard after a bomb killed a policeman near Srinagar in October.

you first look down on the Kashmir valley, a sign on the roadside says “Stop Here, You Are in Paradise Now.” While this is still true as far as the landscape and the riches of nature go, it has long been a blatant lie with respect to the political and social situation.

The core of the region is the Kashmir Valley with its capital Srinagar. There is almost no industry in Kashmir. But since it is the Himalayan region richest in water and least affected by the torrential monsoon rains, it is an agricultural paradise. In the whole of the former principality of Kashmir, divided into Indian, Pakistani and Chinese-occupied sectors, there now live over 10 million people, 7 million of them in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.

For half a century this paradise on Earth has been ripped apart by smoldering and open wars over national liberation. The death toll is estimated at between 40,000 to 85,000 victims, counting only the open war period since 1989. At the same time, Kashmir has twice been the major pretext for war between India and Pakistan, with frequent bloody frontier skirmishes the rest of the time. Since both countries now possess nuclear weapons and remain in constant confrontation, a disastrous showdown is always around the corner. The imperialist powers, most notably the United States, fear such an explosion because it could destroy the present regional and world power alignments. Even more,

such a war is feared by the Kashmiri masses because they will bear the brunt of a bloody conflict which can have no positive results for their aspirations. Kashmiris are now trapped in a maelstrom: not only are regional forces destroying their land but the dominant imperialist world power insists on its right to determine their destiny.

At all costs, Bush & Co. have tried to damp down the immediate threat of a nuclear clash over Kashmir, lest it set off a political chain reaction. Another war would impact heavily in the already restive Muslim countries; it would immediately draw Russia and China and their rival interests onto the scene; and it would escalate the attention of America's allies/rivals among the West European imperialist powers. The U.S. claims the sole right to brandish nuclear weaponry in the interests of its exploitative needs across the world. And it does not like other powers upsetting its "stabilization" goals in any region, much less one so fundamentally unstable.

While its ally Israel has sent counterinsurgency specialists to support the Indian army, the U.S., which favored Pakistan almost up to the breakdown of the Soviet Union, has since adopted an attitude of neutrality, with a slight tendency in favor of the strategically and economically more important India. (In late October India undertook its first joint Air Force exercises with the U.S. in Indian air space.) In the wake of September 11 and the U.S. invasion of neighboring Afghanistan, Pakistan has been forced into a more subservient relationship to Washington. In turn, this has meant a more delicate balancing act between Pakistan and India for American diplomacy in Kashmir and in general.

THE 2002 ELECTIONS

Regional elections were held in Jammu and Kashmir in September and October. While the main political parties confronting each other in Kashmir are the ruling National Conference (NC) and the "oppositional" All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), this relationship of forces does not translate on the electoral level. The APHC is a coalition of 23 organizations: some of them pro-Pakistani and others pro-independence, like the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). It was formed in 1993 and had called for a boycott of the elections in 1996, thus enabling the NC under the leadership of Farooq Abdullah to win a landslide victory. It opposed taking part in the elections because that would legitimize Kashmir's membership in the Indian Union. Instead it called for one-day general strikes during all stages of the elections, and managed to virtually close down the cities and regions where they did so.

Meanwhile, those taking part in the elections softened their rhetoric in order to appeal to frustrated followers of the NC. Fearing to lose its sinecures, the NC tried to gain ground by recycling old nationalist propaganda about autonomy, while at the same time supporting the Indian government led by the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP). Of course, the demand for autonomy is not only rejected by the BJP but also by the sec-

ond large party of the Indian bourgeoisie, the Indian National Congress (INC) led by Sonia Gandhi.

The main contending parties in the elections were the NC, the INC, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and so-called independents. The voting turnout was less than 50 percent, a sign of rejection of the process itself and also a result of pressures on the part of nationalist groups – primarily by the violent armed Islamists who have now become a crucial factor. No party won a majority, and eventually the PDP and INC agreed to a coalition government with rotating leadership. What has to be watched now is how seriously the government implements its promise to



Kashmiri women in Pakistan protest 55th anniversary of India's takeover of Kashmir.

release political prisoners and punish security forces who are guilty of gross human rights violations. The militant opposition, however, has not waited. It has already stepped up armed attacks and murdered members of the new coalition, while the Indian armed forces continue their killing.

While India of course views the elections as a confirmation of Kashmir's membership within the Indian Union, the reality is far from proving such a claim. In his first interview ever, Sayed Salahuddin, leader of the Islamist group Hizb ul-Mujahideen, points to the fact that the turnout was even lower

than in 1996. On Pakistani television he claimed that fighting between the NC on the one hand and the INC and PDP on the other was the main cause of the election violence, perpetrated in part by captured militants of armed groups like his, deployed by all three parties. Further, Salahuddin pointed out that the INC had made propaganda out of the fact that the NC was an ally of the BJP, which had killed Muslims in Gujarat, in India itself, this summer.

Nevertheless it remains true that "normal" channels were also at work. For example, the Muslim-fundamentalist Lashkar-e-Tayyaba had issued a threat to murder anyone who participated in the elections, while the BJP government was busy putting Jammu and Kashmir under virtual military siege – sending another 45,000 troops in addition to the 600,000-strong army, paramilitary and police forces already present. In the final analysis, there is virtually no way to establish the true number of people who might have voted voluntarily.

ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

In an immediate sense, the history of this regional conflagration begins with the British leaving their "crown jewel," India, after World War II. The overwhelmingly Hindu Indian Union and the secessionist Muslim Republic of Pakistan immediately went to war with each other, thereby denying the Kashmiri population the right of national self-determination; instead, each took as much of the region as their respective military power allowed for.

But in another sense, the roots of the conflict reach much deeper. For their own imperialist needs, the British whipped up old historical differences so as to create in a now-familiar bloody divide-and-rule pattern. Although the region – which used to be isolated from the outside world for a considerable part of the

year, until the construction of the Jawahar tunnel – had for several periods of its history been subsumed by larger empires, most of the time it had been an independent Hindu kingdom or an autonomous Muslim Sultanate.

Far from leading to cultural stagnation, this isolation helped to bring about some cultural traits which, until recently differentiated the region ideologically from much of the surrounding world. Here Hindu culture developed a relatively realistic view of history; here a sharply satirical Sanskrit literature was created. Before the end of the first millennium AD, rivers were regulated in order to stop the devastating floods. Kashmir in the late 10th century was also the place where the philosopher Abhinavagupta, on the basis of religious interpenetration and speculative thinking, developed a world view which is said to have anticipated Hegel. Socially, Hinduism in Kashmir was largely shaped by the notoriously heterodox and “liberal” Shivaism, which helped to greatly soften the otherwise rigid caste system.

Considering these developments, it is little wonder that when Islam came to Kashmir, the mystical Sufi variety was adopted by large parts of the population. Zealotry was so alien here that Islam even entered into a combination with Shivaism. Only here did the Muslims take part in all of the Hindu festivities; only here did the sultans build new Hindu temples, as well as mosques where pictures of the Hindu goddess Kali can be found. When religious strife did arise, it was the doing of outside forces. Islam, voluntarily adopted by many Kashmiris, is now the religion of about 80 percent of those in the Kashmir part of Jammu and Kashmir; of almost the entire population of the Pakistani-occupied part euphemistically called Azad Kashmir (“Free Kashmir”) and of that part which Pakistan calls the Northern Areas; and of about 50 percent of Indian-occupied Ladakh, with the other half being Buddhists. However, in Jammu, the southwestern part of the state, the Muslims total only 35 percent compared to 62 percent Hindus and 3 percent Sikhs.

THE WAR OF PARTITION

The seeds of today’s seemingly insoluble and endless conflict were sown by the British colonialists in two installments. First, in 1846 the colonialists set up the Hindu Dogra dynasty as ruler of a semi-independent Kashmir principality. Then, following World War II, when they could not hold on to their empire any longer, the British used the divide-and-rule strategy by encouraging the desire of the Muslim part of the Indian bourgeoisie to break away and form a separate state, Pakistan, on a religious-communalist basis. When India was thus partitioned in August 1947, Pakistan became a purely Muslim state under the leadership of the Muslim League, a party made up of wealthy landowners and conservative intellectuals (which in the 1937 elections had only secured the votes of 4.8 percent of the Muslims). Meanwhile, the Indian Union was ruled by an overwhelmingly Hindu big bourgeoisie, the leading party of which, the Congress, claimed to rule a secular state in the name of all its religious and ethnic communities. The truth is that in the course of its existence as an independent state, India – or rather the ruling bourgeoisie – has proved unable to fulfill any of the promises of its national revolution. With sharpening class antagonism and increasing dependence on the imperialists, India has become rife with nationalist and religious strife – so much so that, in 17 out of the 25 provinces, excluding Kashmir, separatist and religious sectarian movements exist alongside a number of radical guerilla movements, often of Maoist leanings.

Partition was accompanied by wholesale bloodshed and

reciprocal expulsions: 8.8 million Hindus were expelled from East and West Pakistan, and 8.5 million Muslims from India. For reasons both ideological and strategic, one crucial issue was the fate of Kashmir. For the Muslim League, leaving a state with majority Muslim population within India would undermine its claims to a separate nationality on the basis of religion. For the INC, this very same idea was a denial of its non-sectarian self-assessment; letting Kashmir go on such terms would sow the seeds for further irredentist moves in the future. Behind the ideological rationale to defend its rule over Kashmir was the wish of the Indian bourgeoisie to rule over a region that controls almost the whole of the Pakistani water supply.

This was why the Indian government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru (whose Brahmin family originated from Kashmir), working in collaboration with the exiting British colonial power, welcomed the decision of the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, to join the Indian Union in October 1947. The Maharaja, who had long been unpopular with the majority of the people, had several reasons for his decision. The crucial one derived from the Spring 1947 peasant revolt against heavy tax levies in the Poonch region. The revolt was answered, in part, by state organized anti-Muslim pogroms carried out by Hindus and Sikhs. Pakistan then seized the opportunity to send Pashtun



Kashmiris demonstrate for independence from India.

tribesmen to support their Muslim “brethren” across the border. But before reaching Srinagar the tribesmen looted and raped so much that even large parts of the Kashmiri Muslim population were not unhappy to see the Indian army come to their defense. The subsequent intervention of Pakistani troops led to a full scale war, officially ended by a ceasefire in 1949. This was followed by the drawing of the so-called “line of control,” which still demarcates the border between India and Pakistan in this region.

This border has never been acceptable to the Kashmiris; nor has it been fully satisfactory for either India or Pakistan. India, however, having taken the best and biggest part of Kashmir, seems generally to be in a defensive position, while the Pakistani side (with the help of a variety of Kashmiri and, in more recent times, international Muslim Jihadi groups) has been intervening more actively, trying to redraw the map. By the summer of 2002, renewed border clashes led to mutual threats of an all-out war between the two nuclear states.

Maharaja Singh’s decision in 1947 to side with India was made somewhat more palatable to the population when India

agreed to allow a referendum on the status of Kashmir, which has been confirmed by various U.N. resolutions since 1948. Yet although Pakistani interference and the promised referendum were factors in the Maharaja's decision, a number of facts on the ground prove that India had planned to take his "raj" anyway. While he thought about remaining independent from both Pakistan and India – a position in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri national movement – neither the British, the Indians or the Pakistanis desired this. For them the region was much too sensitive for an independent weak state, at a time when post-war international realignments were already on the horizon.

A further factor was the position of the leadership of the Kashmiri national movement, which first came into being as a protest movement against the repressive policies of the Dogra dynasty in the 1930's. By then Singh had strengthened the tendency to give public offices to Hindus instead of Muslims, sparking a violent protest in 1930, which was repressed. In 1932, the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was founded by Sheikh Abdullah. Though it was a Muslim organization, it was nationalist and not religious in character, with strong social reformist tendencies. In 1939 it was renamed the National Conference and felt close to the Indian National Congress. In 1941 a Muslim Conference was founded in Kashmir which supported the "two nation theory" propounded by the leader of the Muslim League, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and therefore called for the integration of Kashmir into a Muslim state.

The NC's social program, laid down in its 1944 program for "a new Kashmir," is what largely alienated it from Pakistan's Muslim League. These included a secular constitution, equality for women, and agrarian reform in favor of those who tilled the land. In 1946 the NC initiated an anti-colonial movement, demanding the revocation of the 1846 treaty that had installed the ruling Hindu dynasty. The Maharaja reacted by declaring martial law and imprisoning the popular Sheikh Abdullah. The NC remained, however, much stronger than the Muslim Conference.

KASHMIR AFTER PARTITION

In 1951, a year after New Delhi had granted Kashmir special status but kept reneging on its promised referendum, the first free elections took place in India. Meanwhile, Abdullah's NC achieved an across-the-board victory in Kashmir, with Abdullah thus becoming Prime Minister. In this capacity, he enacted a land reform which deposed the local landlords and allowed land to be owned only by Kashmiris. Since this reform goes primarily against the interests of the Hindu bourgeoisie, the present Hindu-chauvinist BJP-government in New Delhi resents it deeply. Two years later, however, Abdullah was deposed because he would not renounce his plans for a referendum on independence.

In 1954 the constitutional assembly of Kashmir ratified Kashmir's accession to the Indian Union. By this time, however, Pakistan had become a cornerstone for the U.S.'s plans to encircle the USSR by a number of regional treaty-based military alliances. India, supported by the Soviet Union, remained a pillar of the non-aligned movement. Meanwhile, Western imperialists now and then uttered some words about Kashmir's independence. When Sheikh Abdullah was imprisoned, Kashmir was brought to a standstill for 20 days by a strike and by countless demonstrations, which were met with brutal repression by Indian troops. Six years later, Abdullah was released and enthusiastically greeted by his people. Then, after a visit to China he was again imprisoned.

In 1965 the Pakistani government, which mistakenly

thought that the Kashmiris wanted to join Pakistan, launched a war to seize the rest of Kashmir. Given India's much larger population and stronger military, it is not surprising that Pakistan was beaten again. In 1971 there was another war between the two countries, this time over East Pakistan, which wanted to split from the main part of the country; with the military support of India, it became the independent state of Bangladesh.

Since India had taken tens of thousands of Pakistani soldiers prisoner, the Pakistani government of the populist Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was forced to agree to treat the Kashmir problem no longer as an international issue but as a bilateral one. This is the position India has maintained ever since. The Pakistanis have been trying to treat the problem as an international issue since it can't win a face-to-face confrontation with India. Abdullah was again released from prison and in 1977 was again re-elected with a clear majority. In the meantime however, he and his movement had been morally broken by the Indian bourgeoisie. Not only did his rule become more and more corrupt, but the NC was also ready now to give in to India. When Abdullah died in 1982, his son Farooq simply took over. The fact that the NC is still formally in power is largely due to the open rigging of the elections of 1989 by the Indian government. That election was in fact won by the oppositional Muslim United Front; but Farooq's government was re-installed nonetheless.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Aside from the bitterness which had been building for years, the demise of the Stalinist states in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980's was a major factor which encouraged the Kashmiris to step up their resistance against India. At that time the national movement was still overwhelmingly made up of secular forces fighting for self-determination, rather than for incorporation into a Pakistani state run mostly by religious-obscurantist military governments and semi-feudal landlords. However, the rise of the Islamist movement, which began with the Iranian revolution in 1979 and gained momentum with the war against the Russian occupation in Afghanistan, couldn't fail to affect Kashmir. Both the military dictatorship of Zia ul-Haq up to 1988 and the following government of Benazir Bhutto had used Saudi petro-dollars and CIA help to build up a strong Islamist movement – in order to both smash the left at home and to topple the pro-Russian government in Afghanistan. The same forces would of course also militate in favor of Kashmir becoming part of Pakistan.

When the Kashmiri national movement simultaneously lost all hope of a peaceful way to solve the national question and of resisting the growing political corruption and impoverishment of large layers of the population, it was forced to turn to Pakistan for support: military bases, training and weapons. The Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Front (JKNLF), as it was at first called when it originated from within Sheikh Abdullah's movement, sent its first militants to Pakistani-occupied Azad Kashmir in 1988 for guerrilla training. Since it lacked any network inside Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistani secret service, ISI, had to lean on the JKLF to prepare an insurrection; ultimately, however, it preferred the pro-Pakistani Islamists and subsequently helped form a number of Jihadi outfits. Thus the JKLF lost all influence as a military force quite a few years ago. Moreover, it has split between a faction that officially still follows a military strategy, under the leadership of Amanullah Khan, and a faction under Yasin Malik which renounced armed struggle in 1994. The JKLF has been further weakened by the fact that on several occasions it has been attacked by Jihadi groups and Pakistani security forces.



Fruits of partition: Indian family displaced by war moves near Pakistan border.

The highly sectarian and terrorist methods of the Jihadi groups in Jammu and Kashmir not only stirred up antagonism between the various religions of the region, which had had a past record of mutual tolerance, but left a growing part of the population disenchanted with the armed struggle. Yet Jammu and Kashmir is probably now the region of the world with the highest density of military personnel. The Islamist guerrillas have not only killed members of competing organizations but have brutally coerced the civilian population into giving them support, through bloody massacres in villages that did not do so (mainly out of fear of the equally brutal backlash of the Indian counterinsurgency forces). In several cases, villages were compelled to obey allegedly Islamic laws and customs never practiced in the region before; the guerrillas are much more interested in enforcing their brand of Islam than in liberating the Kashmiris from the Indian yoke, let alone from social oppression.

In the Pakistani-occupied part the guerrillas have on several occasions attacked members of the National Awami Party of Kashmir. As for the JKLF, it was not allowed to stand in the last elections in supposedly “Free” Kashmir, since it questions the Pakistani character of this part of Kashmir too.

In the wake of the United States’ “war on terrorism,” the present military government in Pakistan has been forced to take some steps against these Islamist groups, which are partly regarded as being Al Qaida surrogates. It is an open secret that General Musharraf’s government does not have the means to really stop these forces, but neither can he take any steps that might be interpreted as a “betrayal” of the Kashmiri struggle. Evidently, given the shaky hold that the Pakistani ruling class now has at home, Musharraf cannot now support any secular alternative to the Islamists. The incoming civilian government, led by a party which is regarded as a Musharraf surrogate but is faced with an Islamist opposition stronger than ever before, will be even less able to stop these forces.

The Kashmiri forces led by the secular wing of the bourgeoisie remain comparatively weak in a situation characterized by armed struggle and military repression. Of course, no sort of liberation can come through the hands of the Jihadi forces any more than it came from those once-strong secular elements. Those Kashmiris who in desperation turned to religious obscurantism have found it to be only another installment in their continuing horror. In that sense, the travail of Kashmir is really a reflection of the overall horror that faces the former colonial and semi-colonial world – a world which after decades of struggle is still imprisoned and exploited by imperialism.

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Under the influence of the USSR and local Stalinists, the working class in the colonial world was drawn into tailing “progressive” secular bourgeois nationalists. Class collaboration in the forms of “all-class” populism and popular frontism meant the subordination of the proletariat to the needs of indigenous capitalism. This meant that the colonial revolution was a bourgeois revolution; it succeeded in achieving national political independence but it could not break from capitalism – imperialism and the world market. That meant that the economic equality and a decent standard of living that the masses yearned for (and which are tasks unique to the internationalist socialist revolution) could never be approached. It also meant that many of the bourgeois democratic demands – division of the land among the peasants, legal equality, women’s equality, voting rights, free speech, trade union rights, self-determination for various subordinated nationalities, freedom of religious expression, etc. – were fleeting or non-existent. In the world today, as Trotsky insisted, only the proletarian seizure of power can carry out the democratic tasks in the course of carrying out the socialist revolution.

The degeneration of the ex-colonial world into shamefaced neo-colonialism was no accident. All the treacherous promises made by the secular “progressives,” guerrilla revolutionaries and nationalist “socialists” were exploded, and the hopes and aspirations of the masses were dashed. It is no wonder that the utter failure of leftish middle class-led secular nationalism led desperate masses, particularly among the permanently unemployed and the more backward rural elements, to look to the clerical demagogues. It is no wonder that the thwarted ambitions of many of the sons of the comprador bourgeoisie led them to enlist as cadres in their organizations. It is no wonder that many workers confused the failure of misled mass actions with the idea that such revolts were themselves fruitless. And if they themselves generally did not embrace fundamentalism and individual terror as answers to imperialist oppression, they saw no alternative.

Of course, religious obscurantism has provided no way out of the deepening world crisis; much less has it paved a way to paradise. Whatever, its fundamentalist form: Christian, Jewish, Hindu or Islamic, it represents the same reactionary immoral outlook of human self-degradation. This is certainly true in the Islamic countries. And, with important variations, nowhere has this been more true than with Kashmir.

The U.S. used to nourish and support a wide range of Islamist outfits in order to defeat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and contain it elsewhere in the region. In the Middle East and South Central Asia, Washington also nurtured groups it hoped would also be useful against the regional leftists. Imperialism hoped that clerical obscurantism would help detour or repress potentially explosive masses by ruthlessly enforcing socially reactionary conditions upon them.

For example, the U.S. accommodated the spread of Saudi Arabian Wahabism throughout the Muslim world. It encouraged the Jihadis in Afghanistan; that meant also aiding it in Pakistan; and inevitably that meant furthering its entrance into the chaos of Kashmir. Now, since Islamic fundamentalism has proved to be a two-edged sword, the U.S. has grown more hostile. Nevertheless, the Jihadis – while capable of much bloodletting and of inflicting further horrors upon the Muslim masses – are incapable of defeating imperialism. They represent another barbaric dead-end for the long suffering laboring classes. And once again, nowhere is this more true than in Kashmir.

The Marxist conception that socialism is impossible if proletarian revolution is restricted to one country has been proved true over and again. In a country like Kashmir, any hope for even real political independence or any other meaningful democratic

rights — much less socialist egalitarianism — must come from proletarian socialist revolution sweeping the region, most certainly including the powerful Indian and Pakistani working class. Kashmir, like Afghanistan, has only a very small working class. It can be the spark but it cannot bring about the fruition of the struggle on its own.

Given the deeply reactionary character of the ruling classes

COFI-Germany: Declaration on the Federal Elections

The statement below was issued by the COFI section in Germany last summer in opposition to left organizations that habitually give electoral support to the Social-Democratic Party.

The main result of the German general election in September was that the working class once again was lured into voting for the Social-Democratic (SPD)/Green coalition. Only several weeks before the elections it looked like the opposition Christian Democrats would win, but two major factors turned the wheel around at almost the last minute.

The government declared its opposition to engaging German forces in any war against Iraq, and Chancellor Schröder seized the opportunity of the immense floods to show “leadership qualities.” Nevertheless, the voters taught the SPD a lesson by reducing that party’s vote by 1.7 million, but kept the coalition in power by increasing the Greens’ vote by 800,000.

The main electoral victim was the allegedly socialist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the heir of the former Stalinist ruling party in East Germany. The PDS lost 600,000 voters and was almost eliminated from the federal parliament, where it now has only two members. This defeat was mainly due to the fact that it had joined in coalition governments with the SPD in several federal states but had proved to be totally unable to prevent the SPD from attacking the workers. The idea of some far leftists that the PDS is worth supporting as a point of attraction has become a pipe dream, now that its political reformism is no longer accompanied by electoral success.

A couple of weeks after the elections, voters are now facing the fact that they have systematically been lied to by the leaders of the coalition. Now that they are in power, these misleaders are doing the opposite of what they promised on almost every front. While Chancellor Schröder and his ministers seem to remain firm on not sending German soldiers to Iraq, they have made it clear by now that they will help U.S. imperialist aggression against this country in various other ways. Air bases will be placed at the disposal of U.S. forces, and German forces will be engaged further in countries like Afghanistan to allow the U.S. to concentrate on a new war.

The German masses, however, are even more concerned about the ever-increasing attacks on their standard of living and social security. Polls show that only four weeks after the vote, the Christian Democrats would now win an election. As we said in our election statement, the working class has no major illusions in the SPD. The ideological confusion and general feeling of weakness within the working class translates into the fact that it shows no signs yet of engaging in major battles to defend its past achievements. As long as this state of affairs lasts, the so called “anti-capitalist movement” is bound to remain comparatively toothless as well, both ideologically as well as politically.

There will be elections to the German federal parliament on September 22. They will formally decide whether the next federal

in India and Pakistan and the aid and comfort given them by Washington, it is obvious that a re-created Fourth International would do all in its power to help the masses in the region to drain one of the world’s most evil cesspools of communalist hatred. Self-determination and liberation of Kashmir is only possible within the framework of a revolutionary socialist federation of South Asia.●

government will be led by the Social Democrats (SPD) or by the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) – at best, because a “grand coalition” between the SPD and the CDU/CSU cannot be ruled out at all.

One of the groups which claim to be Trotskyist, the Gruppe Arbeitermacht (GAM; Workers Power Group), in its call for a vote for the SPD and/or the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism, ex-Stalinists), summarizes the results so far of the SPD/Green government’s policies in power as follows:

In the past four years Schröder and Fischer have done a lot for the ruling class. Their record speaks for itself:

- **Two wars involving the German Army, transforming it to become a world-wide intervention force;**
- **“Internal security” strengthened by Interior Minister Schily’s “Anti-Terror Pact”;**
- **Massive tax cuts for big business, banks and the wealthy;**
- **More extensive privatization of public services;**
- **Opening up the pension system for privatization;**
- **Introduction of the Euro to challenge the dollar as the leading imperialist currency**

And above all: through the alliance with the trade union bureaucracy and social-democratic control of the unions, the defensive struggles of the workers could be prevented from developing widening. Yet imperialist capital is a



German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. Former revolutionary now serves ruling class.

thankless master. “Red-green” has done its duty; now’s the time for Stoiber’s conservative cudgel.

To this summary of the well-paid efforts of the SPD/Green government at pulling the wool over workers’ eyes, a great number of further “successes” could be added. However, we don’t think that this is really necessary.

Unlike the anarchists, who reject on principle any participation in elections to bourgeois institutions, our position as Marxists is a tactical one. But we are fundamentally opposed to any participation in a bourgeois government (unlike, incidentally, the Spanish anarchists in the 1930’s).

The basis of our approach to bourgeois elections is the question of how to free the working class, the potentially revolutionary subject within capitalism, from the ideological and political influence of all factions of the bourgeoisie – both the ruling big bourgeoisie and the various layers of the petty bourgeoisie – in order to transform it from a sociological class into a political class of and for itself. This political independence of the working class is manifested in its revolutionary socialist consciousness and the class struggles it wages on this basis. The realization of the class’s potential to become a revolutionary subject led by its own vanguard party is the only reason for existence of a communist organization. It is the precondition for a future for the overwhelming majority of the world’s people, a future not characterized by exploitation, oppression, war, hunger, ecological and psychological devastation. At a time when the sicknesses of imperialism, which the bourgeoisie’s ideologues had prematurely declared dead, have returned with a vengeance, this perspective is the only feasible one even to secure significant reforms in the interests of the laboring masses within the capitalist system.

It is on this basis that we must answer the question, whether a call for a vote for any of the parties running in this election corresponds to these criteria. To foreshadow the answer: KOVI-BRD (COFI-Germany) holds the opinion that it would not.

Since for the left, which we want to address with this statement, it should be undoubted that a vote for any of the openly bourgeois parties, such as the CDU/CSU, the FDP, the “Party of Bible-Believing Christians,” the NPD or Schill’s “Party of the Law-and-Order Offensive,” would be an open betrayal of the working class, what remains is to talk about the SPD, the PDS and, unfortunately, the Greens, as well as about several mini-parties which declare themselves to be Marxist, such as the DKP, the MLPD and the KPD.

**KOVI-Dokumente VII
Kommunistische Organisation
für die Vierte Internationale**

- L.D. Trotzki, Klasse, Partei und Führung: Warum wurde das spanische Proletariat besiegt?
- Unser Standpunkt: Nein zu neuen reformistischen Parteien!
- ATTAC und die ‘Linke’ (A. Holberg)
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As we have mentioned, some “Trotskyists,” like the GAM, call for an SPD vote like Pavlov’s dogs. It may still command the support of large layers of the organized working class, even though it has not officially called itself a workers party since the Godesberg convention of 1959. But does this mean, that Marxists have to support that party “like the rope supports the hanged man” (Lenin) in order to be able to confront the illusions held by its supporters with reality?

The leader of the American Trotskyists, James Cannon, said in 1948:

It has been argued that “we must go through the experience with the workers.” That is a very good formula, provided you do not make it universal. We go with the workers only through those experiences which have a class nature. We go with them through the experience of strikes, even though we may think a given strike untimely. We may even go with the workers through the experience of putting a reformist labor party in office, provided it is a real labor party and subject to certain pressures of the workers, in order that they may learn from experience that reformism is not the correct program for the working class. But we do not go through the experience of class collaboration with the workers.

As far as the SPD is concerned, the truth is that the workers are less dumb than large parts of the left, since they don’t have any illusions in the SPD as a party waging class war or fighting for socialism. At best they view the SPD as the lesser evil. However, this often suffices to cripple the working class in the face of attacks by the bourgeoisie within the SPD, by means of the organic relations between the trade union bureaucracy and the SPD, in a way that would be hard to imagine in the case of an openly bourgeois government. A call for an SPD vote therefore does not help to destroy illusions in the party regarding the class struggle and socialism. There are no such illusions!

As for the PDS, it is much less organically linked to the labor movement than the SPD. The rightward tendencies which have gone stronger in recent times have been there from the beginning. The PDS developed out of the Stalinist SED and, ideologically, is a miniature, pluralist “popular front.” The left-reformist and centrist forces within the party can only become more marginalized under the conditions of class struggle that is for the most part dormant and a paralysed working class which has not been able to free itself from the grip of its traditional misleaders from the SPD, trade unions and Stalinist bureaucracies. A success of the PDS in elections would only further strengthen the rightward shift of this party, as it would be understood as a reward for the policies of its present leadership.

Furthermore, a strengthening of the party or even a return to the federal parliament would heighten the prospects for a coalition with the SPD. The fact that the PDS is the only party still expressing a strong pacifist tendency is under these conditions of secondary importance. This pacifism, always bourgeois, is in itself a helpless attitude when confronted with reality, and will decompose into ultimate unrecognizability the more the party is successful and draws closer to the SPD. The drive to the troughs of power, proper to the leaders of the PDS as to every bourgeois politician, stands in contradiction to all its presently declared ideals and will undoubtedly overcome them.

Furthermore, it is not at all in the interests of the working class to nourish new reformist parties after the betrayals and demise of Social-Democracy and Stalinism. Such new parties will inevitably follow the paths of their repellent models.

The Greens are, as is well known, not a working-class party

at all. They have already blazed the rightward trail the PDS is preparing to follow, and in doing so have corrupted a considerable number of people who were subjectively leftist. In view of their record, revolutionary leftists should be delighted to see this party's eventual disappearance from the political landscape, even if nothing can be done about the sad fact that such famous "r-revolutionists" as Joschka Fischer & Co. will be rewarded with high pensions for services delivered to their bourgeois masters.

Voting for grouplets like the DKP, MLPD or KPD is politically meaningless. None of them is rooted in any noticeable section of the working class. None of them have any chance to even achieve a symbolic success. All three of them are in different degrees linked to their Stalinist heritage, and thus, notwithstanding the sincerity of many of their militants, they are the representatives of the intrusion of a petty-bourgeois bureaucracy into the working class and a political current which, in the 20th century, acted as the gravedigger of the one and only proletarian

socialist revolution, the October Revolution. A vote cast for such a group at best symbolizes the wish to put the bourgeoisie's back up a bit, and at worst it means ideologically supporting groups which either more or less offensively advocate Stalinist ideology, as is the case with the MLPD and the KPD, or who have only incompletely broken with it, such as the DKP.

The working class in the FRG current lacks a party of its own. The vote for any of the bourgeois parties can not be taken by revolutionaries as a basis for their exposure since the working class does not harbor any illusions in them transcending capitalism, or even merely significant reformist illusions. A victory of the once reformist SPD or the still reformist PDS would therefore give as little self-confidence to the working class to engage in new class struggles as it did four years ago when the SPD/Green government was voted in. Under these circumstances we reject participation in the forthcoming elections.●

Bonn, August 30, 2002

Chicago: Teachers' Reform Leaders Capitulate

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) has had a new reform leadership for over a year. In May 2001 Debra Lynch was elected president, and her PACT caucus (ProActive Chicago Teachers) swept most of the seats on the union's executive board. The Chicago bourgeois media labels PACT as militant and "hard-line," in contrast with the previous "collaborative" leadership. Rank-and-file labor activists agree: according to the October *Labor Notes*, "The union is now perceived by its members, the

ers and about 11,000 other school workers; aside from the high school teachers, the majority of its members are Black and Latino. Of the 350,000 students in the Chicago public schools, the vast majority are Black and Latino; approximately 90 percent of them live in poverty. A genuinely militant fight by this powerful union could point the way to working-class-wide resistance against austerity and racism in Chicago. But PACT cannot challenge the bosses because it remains tied to the capitalist system and bourgeois methods of struggle.



Chicago teachers and school workers demonstrate at Illinois legislature.

media, and political, business, and community groups as a force to be reckoned with."

But in fact PACT has failed to lead a fight against the ruling class's attacks on the teachers, other school workers and the education system. The CTU is the largest union in the state of Illinois, with approximately 35,000 members. It includes teach-

ers and about 11,000 other school workers; aside from the high school teachers, the majority of its members are Black and Latino. Of the 350,000 students in the Chicago public schools, the vast majority are Black and Latino; approximately 90 percent of them live in poverty. A genuinely militant fight by this powerful union could point the way to working-class-wide resistance against austerity and racism in Chicago. But PACT cannot challenge the bosses because it remains tied to the capitalist system and bourgeois methods of struggle.

For all the hot air spewed by ruling-class politicians about education, the reality is that the capitalists and their political parties do not want a highly educated working class. The educational system is set up to fit the capitalists' labor needs. The vast majority of students from working-class families get sub-par educations; they are crowded into crumbling schools that lack the technology and funding necessary for a decent education. Also, many working-class students come from families whose day-to-day struggle with poverty and oppression makes securing a good education almost an impossibility. In racist America, students of color especially find themselves in this situation.

BACKGROUND ON THE CTU

The CTU often exhibited militancy in the past two decades. During the 1980's, under the leadership of Jacqueline Vaughn, the CTU struck eight times, winning many important gains and rights. This string of strikes was primarily defensive, combatting the Chicago Board of Education (BOE) that was always crying bankruptcy and regularly defaulting on salaries.

After Vaughn's death in 1994, vice-president Tom Reece took over. The modus operandi of Reece and his United

Progressive Caucus (UPC) was open class collaboration. He trumpeted that the days of striking and militancy were over. What the city, students, parents and teachers really needed, according to Reece, was "labor peace, stability and reform." He delivered on his promise of a CTU that would "work with the BOE, not against it." This translated into a series of defeats, the most damaging being the passage of Article 4.5 of the 1995 Amendatory Act in the Illinois legislature and the adoption of "reconstitution" in 1998-99.

Article 4.5 is union-busting legislation that allows the BOE to call the shots on virtually all important issues concerning student education and school workers' rights. It gave Chicago's Mayor Daley full control over the public schools. It gutted the CTU's collective bargaining rights over classroom size, the length of the school day and calendar, the creation of charter schools, privatization of pilot programs, after-school programs, lunchroom staff and engineers and input on special education. These issues affect not just teachers but all working-class families in the city. The law was passed in the Illinois Legislature without a peep from the CTU leadership, which made no effort to mobilize the CTU's ranks or the broader working class. Its passage dealt a substantial blow to a once militant union. Not surprisingly, Article 4.5 has won national praise from the ruling class, its press and politicians, including Bill Clinton.

The "reconstitution process" of 1998-99 was another BOE "reform" that Reece did nothing to stop. Bypassing the contractual process for teacher evaluation, all teachers in eight of the city's poorest high schools were required to re-apply for their jobs because of low standardized test scores. Over two hundred were reassigned or lost their jobs in a clear-cut attempt at negating tenure and removing militant "undesirables." Reconstitution falsely placed the blame for poor student test scores on the teachers, not on the rotten conditions that capitalist racism and austerity inflicts on urban public schools. It also victimized the students, since many found themselves with no teachers at all for months, in some cases years.

PACT: FROM OPPOSITION TO OFFICE

Over the past decade, Debra Lynch ran against Reece three times. Her first two bids to oust Reece were unsuccessful. Yet the second was close, and this led PACT to file lawsuits with the Labor Relations Board against the UPC for vote fraud. This tactic is reprehensible and unprincipled because it brings in the capitalist state and its courts into a workers' organization. The danger of state intervention in the union far outweighs any immediate electoral gains.

In 2001, PACT and Lynch handily beat the UPC and Reece.

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In the campaign they correctly accused Reece of being a lapdog for management. They made abstract and ambiguous statements in their campaign literature like: "We'll mobilize the membership when necessary." They won largely because of the members' dissatisfaction with Reece and the UPC.

A major factor in PACT's victory was the intervention of two of Reece's buddies, who essentially went on the campaign trail for him. These were BOE chief Paul Vallas and Mayor Richard Daley; both commented publicly (Vallas several times) how great a union leader Tom Reece was and how important it was for him to retain his presidency. Daley made the political mistake of declaring that elementary school teachers might soon be dealt some of the same harsh measures that their high school counterparts had faced. Daley, not the sharpest crayon in the box, thereby screwed up the successful divide-and-conquer scenario for his pal Reece. Vallas and Reece had levied the majority of their attacks on the high school teachers, leaving the elementary school teachers relatively less scathed by comparison.

In its first two campaigns, PACT had won among the high school teachers but lost in the elementary schools. Now, the elementary school teachers knew that if the high school teachers were any precedent, they would receive no help from the union. Thus Daley and Vallas helped lose the election for Reece. Quickly thereafter, because of this fiasco along with lower than predicted standardized test scores, Vallas was forced to resign his position as head of the BOE, and Arne Duncan replaced him.

When the CTU membership voted Lynch into office, the vast majority understood there would not be a significant change in the program or the behavior of the leadership. They correctly realized that Lynch wouldn't be as crooked as Reece, and she

Marxism, Interracialism and the Black Struggle

A Proletarian Revolution pamphlet by Sy Landy

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

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might talk out of the left side of her mouth a little more, but the same game would prevail – lobbying, backing the Democrats and stifling the impetus to the militant mass action that is necessary to stave off the mayor and the BOE’s attacks.

Over the last two years, the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) has worked in the CTU fighting for mass action against the perpetual capitalist attacks. In various ways we have demonstrated the need for a revolutionary leadership, not class collaboration with our enemy – the ruling class and its political parties. Unlike the bulk of the far left in the union, the LRP did not endorse Lynch and PACT. We wrote in a leaflet distributed before the election:

With its weak history as an opposition, PACT’s meager campaign rhetoric reduces to the issue of trade union democracy. Certainly, the political life of the CTU has been crippled by the bureaucratic abuses of the Reece clique, but the lack of democracy that exists is a result of the current leadership’s inability to lead a fightback against the attacks. Given PACT’s proven reluctance to lead that fightback, we are skeptical that it could even carry the single miserable plank – trade union democracy — that ostensibly separates it from Reece. Indeed, if PACT wins, and when push comes to shove, it is not out of the question that they will be as undemocratic as Reece.

This indeed turned out to be the case. The *Labor Notes* article apologizes:

The new leadership has found that making change is much harder than it anticipated, and it is especially hard when the membership is demobilized and passive. ...

Due to the vociferous opposition and underhanded tactics employed by supporters of the ousted caucus ... PACT finds itself employing “floor management” tactics not dissimilar to some employed by the old guard caucus, in an effort to get business done. The desire to have open and democratic meetings has not yet become a reality.

It’s not just the “old guard” opposition that prevents PACT from running the union democratically. As we will see, Lynch has gone out of her way to try to stifle opposition from the left.

PACT’S FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE

The two major events in the first year of PACT’s leadership were their pitiful campaign to repeal Article 4.5 and their response to the closings of three elementary schools in Black neighborhoods.

Lynch raised a motion to launch a campaign against Article 4.5 at the November 2001 House of Delegates meeting.

This was actually in counterposition to a motion from an LRP supporter to build a mass demonstration over classroom size issues, promotional policy, capital funding and city job and service cutbacks. Our supporter had pointed out that there is no better way to launch a campaign to get our collective bargaining rights back than with a mass demonstration; it would be the perfect start. He also argued that if the leadership’s “campaign” meant in reality lobbying local and state politicians, pandering to business interests and closed-room deals with the mayor, it would be a diversion.

Predictably, Lynch’s campaign turned out to be just that. Its centerpiece was to endorse the gubernatorial election of Democrat Rod Blagojevich, whose campaign received \$45,000 from the CTU treasury – money that would have been far better used to mobilize CTU members, students and other working people. There were no demonstrations, no mass meetings and no serious attempts to educate the membership about 4.5. What did take place were several closed-door meetings with City Hall over several months. The result of these meetings was not the repeal of 4.5 but a meaningless tentative agreement with the mayor.

The Lynch-Daley “agreement” is a total sham. Both Lynch and Duncan have agreed to support state legislation which will grant the CTU the right to “discuss,” and call for non-binding mediation on, most of the items prohibited by 4.5. But there is no onus on the Board of Education. The BOE still retains the right to refuse to bargain on any of the specified issues. And a non-binding mediator, even if he or she supports the union’s claims, can’t force the BOE’s hand, since 4.5 is still state law. As a perceptive delegate observed at the September 2002 House of Delegates meeting, “instead of winning back our rights to collectively bargain, we’ve been handed the right to collectively beg.”

The editors of the right-wing *Chicago Tribune* agree. In an editorial on September 16, they wrote:

The [proposed] legislation apparently does no harm. It leaves ultimate decision-making authority with the administration and does not provide teachers with the right to strike over any of those issues. It gives Lynch enough to say to her members she did something about bargaining rights.

Exactly. The “agreement” is a victory for the ruling class.

Equally treacherous was Lynch’s handling of the closings of the elementary schools. In May 2002, the BOE decided to close down the three schools after the school year and bus the 750-plus students elsewhere.

The BOE’s reasoning for shutting the schools down was their poor performance on standardized tests and below-average attendance rates. Lynch’s response was a couple of “demonstra-

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tions” at BOE meetings for which she only mobilized union staffers, along with a tepid press campaign in which she failed miserably to expose the outright racist character of the school closings in a way that could have helped build a real struggle. While palatial magnet schools have been quickly constructed to serve the middle class, poor Black and Latino youth find their schools closed and are forced to go to other schools (not the middle-class ones!) and into overcrowded classrooms. And as we go to press, a sizeable portion of the affected teachers and school workers still don’t have jobs.

THE LRP’S INTERVENTION

In our two years in the House of Delegates, the LRP has put forward motions that would have pushed the CTU to lead struggles on issues vital to the working class. We have been the only organization to consistently fight against both the UPC’s and PACT’s political and monetary support to capitalist politicians – Democratic or Republican. We proposed that the CTU build the mass demonstrations against the austerity and anti-union attacks; that the union give no political or monetary support to Democratic or Republican politicians, who are enemies of the working class; and that the CTU mobilize to stop the Ku Klux Klan from marching in Skokie in 2000.

Our motion for the union to oppose the imperialist war in Afghanistan, introduced two-and-a-half weeks after September 11, was shouted down by patriotic delegates and suppressed by President Lynch because the LRPer characterized the United States as imperialist. Before the October House of Delegates meeting, we distributed 350 copies of a motion condemning any U.S./U.N. attack on Iraq. It was sent to committee and will be debated and voted on in December.

At a special June House of Delegates’ meeting, our comrade and several other delegates spoke against Lynch’s lobbying strategy for opposing Article 4.5. He introduced a countermotion calling on the union leadership to mobilize its membership for a mass demonstration against 4.5. Lynch undemocratically first ruled his motion out of order, but another delegate moved to suspend the rules in order to discuss and vote on it; the delegates then agreed by a two-thirds vote. The delegates then passed a motion committing the leadership to build a demonstration in September, but the proposal was put off and finally squelched by the leadership.

Because of our prominent role in exposing Lynch’s pretensions, she attempted a slander campaign by way of a letter sent in late July to our supporter and another delegate from the lead counsel of the CTU. This letter charged that they “loudly and repeatedly ranted and shrieked at President Lynch, creating disruption.... Your actions bordered on assault.” All the charges were blatantly false and clearly designed to intimidate. In response, the accused delegates obtained statements from several delegate witnesses affirming that no such disruption had occurred. At the next delegates’ meeting, both the union lawyer’s letter and our supporter’s outraged response were circulated in order to expose the leadership’s witch hunt. Nothing further has been heard from the union officials on the matter.

THE LEFT IN PACT AND THE CTU

There are a smattering of self-styled socialist organizations with supporters in the House of Delegates. Some, like Solidarity are active in PACT; others, like the Progressive Labor Party and the International Socialist Organization (ISO), supported it electorally. None of these delegates supported our motions for mass

action. All have been either entirely mute or have come out against proposals that challenge PACT’s strategy.

The most prominent “left” capitulator is Debra Pope, a long-time supporter of Solidarity, which calls itself a “revolutionary and feminist organization.” She sits through every House of Delegates meeting while the PACT leaders put forward their class collaborationist, patriotic program without saying a word in disagreement. She edits the CTU newspaper *Chicago Union Teacher*, which regularly features pleas for union members to give money to the Democrats and to politically support ruling-class politicians.

The *Labor Notes* article already cited is in the same mold. It was written by CTU Executive Board member Norine Gutekanst. She writes of the Lynch-Daley agreement,

The campaign to regain bargaining rights is tying the union closely to the fortunes of the Democratic candidate for governor, Rod Blagojevich, who supports the restoration, and to Democratic legislators. Political neutrality is virtually impossible, since the only legislators who support teachers’ bargaining rights are Democrats.

Labor Notes is closely tied to the Solidarity group, which used to consider it a matter of principle that workers’ organizations not support bourgeois politicians. Now, under the pretext that there is no alternative, they in effect call on their Illinois readers to vote Democratic.

"RANK-AND-FILIST" STRATEGY

The “socialists” who either quietly or openly betray what should be their own principles have a long history. The far left is small but has been key in building “rank and file caucuses” in the unions, notably the Teamsters (see *PR 56*) and Local 100 of the Transport Workers in New York City. Without the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, Ron Carey could not have won the Teamsters’ presidency in 1996. Roger Toussaint took over TWU Local 100 as a leader of the New Directions caucus. Both caucuses were heavily influenced by socialists, mainly from Solidarity.

The “rank-and-filist” strategy persuades the leftist activists to conceal their socialist ideas from their co-workers; they present themselves instead as fervent reformers. They do so not mainly to protect themselves from repression by the labor bureaucracy or the government; rather they assume that socialism isn’t relevant to workers right now. Since reforming the trade unions is the immediate task in their view, in day-to-day union work revolutionary conceptions and principles can be submergled. We have pointed to the dangers of this practice many times. Now we see that the submergence of principle has led to supporting bourgeois politicians, who are among the working class’s main enemies.

Since such left outfits can attract workers and youth looking for an alternative to the bureaucracy, we in the LRP address revolutionary-minded workers to convince them that a decisive break with their present strategy is necessary. In the schools, we proudly fight for the best interests of the students, against every attack on the students’ basic right to a decent education. We aim to show that the tremendous productive and creative capacity of working-class youth will never be tapped under capitalism. Only with socialism, where our labor and production will be utilized for human needs, will the almost limitless potential of youth be able to flower. The understanding of capitalism and the fight to replace it with socialism mean building the revolutionary workers’ party. •

Iraq War

continued from page 1

The U.S.'s posturing is utterly hypocritical. The U.S. is the only ruling class in the world to have used nuclear weapons against population centers, when it bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. And the only Middle Eastern state with nuclear weapons is the U.S.'s ally, Israel, which boasts that it has nuclear missiles trained on every major city in the Arab world. Of course, Israel is not being ordered to disarm. On the contrary, the U.S.'s rulers need Israel armed to the teeth as its watchdog to guard the region's oil wealth on behalf of American companies.

- The White House claims that Iraq has links to Osama bin Laden – again, with no evidence. When it was rumored that September 11 hijacker Mohammed Atta had met with Iraqi officials in Prague, the FBI and CIA dismissed the story. So has the Czech government. But the White House and the Pentagon are still pushing this story.

- Bush says that since Saddam Hussein is a dictator, a U.S. takeover would “liberate” Iraq. But in reality Iraqis feel forced to defend Hussein in order to defend their own existence under the U.S. threat. Hypocritically, the U.S. is not proposing that the Iraqis choose their government for themselves; that would be decided by a U.S. military commander, along the lines of General

Douglas MacArthur in post-World War II Japan.

The U.S. can't risk allowing free elections because of Iraq's large working class, its large national minority of Kurds who demand self-determination and potent religious differences. The political ruling class, whether led by Saddam or his most eligible opponents, stems from the minority Sunni Arab population. It is unloved by most Sunnis and even more hated by the more numerous Shi'ites in Baghdad and the South.

That is why Saddam was left in power by Bush I and Clinton for so long. They didn't like his proclivity for bettering his own share at the expense of



Washington, DC, October 26. Demonstrator protests continuing bombing and sanctions against Iraq.

imperialism, but they did grudgingly respect his ability to repress Iraqis and his usefulness as a local subordinate in warding off destabilization. Iraq has no counterpart to Hamid Karzai, the Afghan puppet who serves the U.S. as a fig leaf for its military occupation. Any of the various exiled “democrats” or local leaders would create more division than unity if elevated to state power.

ASSERTING IMPERIALIST DOMINATION

Since the official reasons for the war are all lies, what are the real aims? There are several intertwined reasons, both international and domestic.

Most importantly, by invading Iraq the U.S. aims both to affirm imperialist domination over an increasingly unstable world and to assert U.S. pre-eminence over all its imperialist rivals.

In the years after World War II, the U.S. overshadowed the rest of the world economically, and it shared militarily superpower status with the Soviet Union. But for the last 30 years, its economic superiority has been challenged by rivals like Japan and Germany. On the other hand, its military dominance was heightened by the collapse of the USSR and its satellites in 1989-91; it now outguns any ten countries on earth together. The fall of the USSR marked the U.S.'s victory in the Cold War, but it also loosened the ties holding together the Western bloc. For as soon as the “evil empire” was ended, the other imperialists no longer had to follow the U.S. lead. *Proletarian Revolution* had foreseen long ago that inter-imperialist rivalries among the Western powers would come to the fore once again, not just between corporations but between states.

The first Iraq war under Bush I in 1991 was meant to assert a “New World Order”: both to rope in the imperial allies behind the U.S. and to teach a bloody lesson to anyone, the masses of the world or regional rulers, who challenged U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. Hussein got out of hand when he invaded Kuwait in 1990. But for the reasons given above, the U.S. could not afford to get rid of him.

In this light, September 11 created both a necessity and an opportunity. On the one hand, the spectacular attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon challenged U.S. imperialism's claim to be all-powerful and thus threatened to undermine its domination, even more than Saddam's seizure of Kuwait had done. On the other hand, public opinion at home gave the U.S. rulers more leeway than they had enjoyed for half a century. Osama bin Laden handed Bush and his advisers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It allowed them to invade Afghanistan, oust the despotic Taliban rulers (whom they had supported the day before) and proclaim victory. But the Afghan war had only a limited success: the top Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders are still at large. The U.S. now has to show that it can intervene wherever it chooses and get the job done.

“EMPIRE” AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

In this spirit, the White House launched its National Security Strategy in September. This document spells out the prerogatives of the U.S. as the sole superpower, which “possesses unprecedented and unequalled strength and influence in the world.” It “will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting pre-emptively.” It asserts the U.S.'s right to wage preventive war – the same “right” claimed by Hitler in invading the Soviet Union, and by Japan in attacking the United States, in World War II. It unilaterally abolishes the basic principle of bourgeois international law that one sovereign state does not meddle in the internal affairs of another; of course, this dictum has always been abused by imperialist powers, and was already ignored by the NATO attack on Serbia and the seizure of Kosovo in 1999. Along with Bush's speech to the U.N. on September 12, it officially breaks with the half-century-long policy of nominally undertaking international policing through the U.N.

The only thing really new in this assertion of imperialist hegemony is its abandonment of diplomatic niceties, replaced by unmasked arrogance. As we pointed out in our last issue, the Bushites and their journalistic cheerleaders are openly using the language of “empire” to justify the U.S.'s world role.

A related reason for invading Iraq is to take direct control of

Iraq's vast oil wealth. That would provide an immediate boost to U.S. profits, particularly for Bush and Cheney's buddies in the oil business. This is especially important at a time when the world economy is sliding further into crisis. Profits are falling, and even the mighty U.S. economy is beginning to sink.

The U.S. already produces most of the oil it uses. But Washington's tightened chokehold on oil supplies will give it an even more powerful economic weapon with which to subordinate its imperialist competitors in West Europe (particularly Germany) and Japan, who are dependent on Middle Eastern oil – as well as uncertain allies/rivals like Russia and China. For this reason, the Bush Administration had secretly drawn up plans for invading Iraq well before September 11.

GAINING PATRIOTIC UNITY AT HOME

A stepped-up war will also have devastating consequences at home, intensifying the “war on terror” whose domestic front has already undermined legal rights and civil liberties and served as the excuse for slashing social service budgets at all levels. It is part of a mounting ruling-class attack on the working class, at home and abroad.

The ruling class knows that as profits continue to fall, companies collapse and more and more corporate corruption is revealed, working-class anger in the U.S. could turn to action. This would be nightmarish for the capitalists, who must drastically intensify their exploitation of the workers in order to rescue their profit rates. Another war, with its opportunity to hype patriotic unity, would be helpful, as would the chance to pour billions more into the arms industry. Moreover, now that a fledgling anti-war movement has arisen, the rulers expect the liberal opposition to retreat once U.S. troops are on the front lines.

Of course, Bush & Co., like Clinton before him, are perfectly capable of using foreign policy and even a war to influence American elections. It is no accident that the drumbeats for war reached fever intensity in the months before November's vote.

“DEMOCRATIZING” THE MIDDLE EAST

It was fear of the masses that compelled Bush I to keep Saddam Hussein in power, and a similar fear inspires a far-reaching scheme by the Bush II team. The success of the Islamists who perpetrated September 11, along with the reaction of the Arab masses to the Palestinian intifada, made it clear that the pawns who rule the explosive Middle East in the interests of imperialism are too shaky to last much longer. A thorough renovation of these fragile, outmoded and unpopular regimes is necessary, if long-term stabilization is to be achieved. As always with American imperialism, the combination of safety-valve reforms and military repression is projected as “democracy.”

Bush & Co. have leaked various scenarios for their “New Iraq,” and their strategy seems to have several stages. They would first replace Saddam Hussein with a U.S. military occupation. These “liberators” would pave the way for an Iraqi military regime which would eventually institute some form of



U.S. diplomats outside the U.N. Security Council, in front of Pablo Picasso's painting "Guernica" depicting horror of Nazi bombing of Spanish town during 1930's Civil War. The U.N. vote authorized a renewed U.S. war on Iraq with similar horrors.

civilian democracy. Such a regime would also serve as a model for transforming other Middle Eastern countries into stable “democracies.” And the American occupation of Iraq would anchor Washington's armed presence in the region to help ensure that the transformation did not get out of control.

The chief U.S. concern is Saudi Arabia. The Bushites hope that their scheme will build middle-class support to prop up the Saudi rulers and end their reliance on the Islamic fundamentalist clergy, which has spread its doctrine throughout the Middle East and South and Central Asia. It needs to deepen President Hosni Mubarak's base in Egypt, where the powerful working class is increasingly restive. It needs to try to create a stable Arab regime that can control a Palestinian mini-state. And it needs to stabilize Iran, which is heading toward an anti-clerical explosion. Washington has to take risks, but it prefers to take them now, when the Arab working class is leaderless and the only political alternative to America's pawns is the Islamic fundamentalists who cannot build a real anti-imperialist fight. That is the gamble they will be undertaking with their Iraqi protectorate.

OPPOSITION ABROAD

The British ruling class, whose economic interests are bound to those of the U.S. capitalists and who are dependent on U.S. power for leverage against other European powers, has of course leaped to support Bush's war plans. And it is no surprise that rival imperialists like Germany, France and Russia speak out against Washington's war moves. They have interests in Iraq that will be undermined if the U.S. is running the country. They also have enough sense to worry about unleashing a tidal wave of mass upheavals around the world. Workers' economic militancy is growing in Europe as well as hostility to the coming war. And working-class and popular protests against imperialism have already

exploded in Indonesia, Argentina and many other countries.

But if mass struggles do not force the U.S. to back off, sooner or later the imperialist rivals will have to accept the U.S.'s dictates. To really challenge U.S.'s war plans would only destabilize the system and also invite popular upheavals. Indeed, all the imperialists ultimately rely on U.S. power to stabilize the system for their benefit as well. Their temporary protests are cynical attempts to extract economic and political concessions from the U.S. before they agree to back the war.

Far more than the European imperialists, the Arab dictators are caught between a rock and a hard place. Kept in power by U.S. arms and finances, they are widely hated as brutal servants of imperialist exploitation. They are particularly despised for collaborating with the U.S.'s support for Israel's murderous oppression of the Palestinian people. So they feel the pressure to back the U.S.'s war drive, but at the same time they fear that outrage at the war will trigger popular uprisings against them. Mubarak pleaded that if there is a war, "not one Arab leader would be able to control the angry outburst of the masses." Amr Moussa, head of the Arab League, gave voice to the same fears, saying an attack on Iraq would "open the gates of Hell in the Middle East."

OPPOSITION AT HOME

The risks of an Iraq war have frightened not only rulers and ruled abroad. A sizeable chunk of the U.S. ruling class is also very wary and has spoken out in public against the Bushites' precipitate action. From the establishment's point of view, the doubts of Henry Kissinger, Lawrence Eagleburger, Brent Scowcroft, Norman Schwarzkopf and various Pentagon planners are not to be brushed aside. They are in no way opposed to imperialist war on principle; they would love to see the U.S. controlling Iraq and its oil revenues. But they fear estranging America's allies abroad and, above all, lighting the spark of revolution among the Arab masses. The Bush goal of stabilizing the Middle East could easily produce the opposite result.

The predominant opinion in the U.S. ruling class may even be that Bush is going too far too fast. But Bush's advisers hold that their aggressive stance can produce its own success. If rival imperialists understand that the U.S. will go it alone, they will jump aboard the war bandwagon in order not to be left out when the spoils are divided. If Arab rulers are scared witless, they will be brought around by determination and force. If domestic opposition is rising, then a dose of war patriotism will bring it into line. The Bush wing of the ruling class is a minority, but a concerted and determined one. They are gambling that their own singlemindedness can win sufficient domestic backing, especially after a few initial military successes, and then compel the rest of the world to let them have their way.

Internationally, this requires behind-the-scenes bargaining at the United Nations, to get a Security Council resolution that will give Bush authority for war. William Safire, a columnist who often serves as a mouthpiece for the Republican right, spelled out the economic consequences if U.S. allies don't go along. Britain, the U.S.'s lapdog, "would replace France as the chief European dealer in Iraqi oil and equipment." Turkey, if it joins in, would find that its "longtime claim to royalties from the Kirkuk oil fields [in Iraq] would at last be honored." (Iraq was part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire up to World War I.) And if Putin doesn't enlist, the new government of Iraq would repudiate the country's \$8 billion debt to Russia, as well as undercut Russian oil markets.

Safire concluded, "The Paris-Moscow-Beijing axis of greed – whose commerce-driven politicians seek to prop up the doomed Saddam in the U.N. – will find its policy highly unprof-

itable." (*New York Times*, Oct. 28.) As if U.S. politicians in the epoch of Enron are not driven by "commerce" and "greed" – i.e., profits – as much or more than anyone else.

FIGHTING AGAINST A WAR ON IRAQ

The ruling class took advantage of September 11 to not just assert its imperialist power overseas, but also to advance its racist, anti-working class agenda at home. Underneath the White House's hypocritical sermons about ethnic and racial tolerance lurks the reality that the chauvinism whipped up against Arabs is not confined to those who live overseas or just to Middle Eastern and Central Asian immigrants in the U.S. The ruling class maintains its minority power by turning worker against worker everywhere. The patriotic "unity" binge was designed as cover for promoting its divisive racial and class war at home.

After September 11, the government boosted its repressive powers. The "USA Patriot Act" carefully defined terrorism broadly enough to include normal working-class struggles like protests and strikes. Terrorism, it declares, includes any "attempt to ... intimidate or coerce a civilian population" or change "the policy of the government by intimidation or coercion." In June, in the face of a possible strike by longshore workers on the West Coast, Bush's "Homeland Security" director Tom Ridge warned that national security was at risk, setting the stage for the courts to attack the union and for the National Guard to break the strike. We can expect much more of this if there is a war against Iraq.

This is why revolutionary communists are working-class internationalists and interracialists. The Iraqis have been forced to tolerate Saddam's murderous rule because of Washington's genocidal threat. For U.S. workers, our main enemy is the same U.S. ruling class. We stand for the defeat of imperialism and the defense of the Iraqi people in any war against the imperialist powers.

Washington's war drive threatens to slaughter hundreds of thousands more Iraqis in our name. In this world of brutal oppression, pacifism is for privileged fools. The workers and oppressed must defend themselves. It is the internationalist duty of the American working class to defend the Iraqi people.

In every workplace, school and college campus, we must cut through the lies and expose Washington's war aims. In the unions, we must raise motions opposing the war that tie the union leaders to more than just nice words – they must be forced to throw the unions' weight behind organizing protest actions.

Fighting Washington's moves toward war with Iraq is also essential to effectively fighting the ruling class's anti-working class and racist attacks at home. A war on Iraq will be used to oppose our struggles. Union workers who need to strike to defend and improve their working and living conditions will be denounced as aiding the enemy. Blacks, Latinos and immigrants who want to protest incidents of racist oppression will be condemned for dividing the nation.

Inevitably, the ruling class will try to use their war on Iraq to escalate their economic attacks on the working class to restore their falling profits. They will revive their calls for sacrifice, look to force us to work harder for less, and claim budget crises as their excuse for cutting spending on education, health care and other social services. Opposing a war on Iraq will prove to be an elementary act of self-defense on the part of workers and oppressed people in this country as well.

THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Mass working-class action is the way to stop the imperialists in their tracks. So far the growing movement against the war has been propelled by students and middle-class activists, although

there have been a good number of anti-war resolutions by local and regional unions. Some of these, to their credit, have opposed the war point blank; others support the imperialist demands on Iraq and endorse the liberal imperialist alternative of calling on Bush not to go to war without U.N. cover.

The demonstrations against the war have been large (around 200,000 in the U.S. on October 26, including 100,000 in Washington). It is a defeat for the warmongers that so many people see through the pervasive media propaganda for war. And the size of the demonstrations in U.S. cities no doubt encouraged the hundreds of millions abroad who despise American policies.

But the protest leaders are pushing the liberal imperialist line. At the main action in Washington on October 26, the featured speakers included politicians Jesse Jackson, Cynthia McKinney and Al Sharpton, whose Democratic Party had given Bush the margins of victory he needed to pass the war powers and USA Patriot acts in Congress. They denounce “Bush’s war” to push the fraud that Democrats in power would act differently.

The organizers and main leg-workers of all such demonstrations are inevitably leftists – people who regard themselves as socialists, pacifists or anarchists. Yet radical ideas are inevitably and deliberately confined to the fringes. On October 26, the chief sponsor was the ANSWER coalition controlled by the Workers World Party, supposedly a communist organization. Yet no speaker from the podium, several of whom were WWPers under other hats, criticized the bankrupt strategy of turning out votes for the pro-war, capitalist Democrats. Workers World itself often calls for votes for liberal Black democrats like McKinney and Sharpton. Ramsey Clark, once U.S. Attorney General under Lyndon Johnson, is the WWP’s ubiquitous “name” speaker, and he runs the liberal imperialist line of appealing to the U.S. to rely on the U.N.

In Washington, Workers World and ANSWER wrote the slogan “Vote No War” across the podium – supposedly to urge people to sign up against the war on a website, but in reality to suggest voting for Democrats in the November Congressional elections. Likewise, the slogan “Regime Change Begins at Home” was a catchy way to soften up voters to swallow the Democratic pill.

The WWP’s press account (*Workers World*, Nov. 7) noted the widespread sentiment of mourning for the late senator Paul Wellstone, who was killed in an airplane crash a few days before the demonstration. *Workers World* praised him as an anti-war populist, even though Wellstone – the most liberal of white Democratic politicians – had voted for the Patriot act, supported the U.S. war in Afghanistan and opposed the coming Iraq war only because the U.N. was not on board. Tellingly, he had refused an invitation to speak at the October 26 anti-war protest in his home state of Minnesota.

The Green Party ran Ralph Nader for president in 2000; he wanted to “save American corporate capitalism from itself.” (See *PR* 62.) Today it declares itself an anti-war party. But what is its actual position on the war? One of its slogans is “No unilateral military actions,” implying that a war would be supportable if it only had U.N. or other multilateral support. A flyer distributed at the DC demo, “Green Party opposes war with Iraq,” says that the President and Congress should “act in concert with the U.N. to address any potential security risks posed by Saddam Hussein” – thereby conceding the imperialists’ right to intervene in Iraq’s sovereign affairs.

Stanley Aronowitz, the Green candidate for governor of

New York, has a long position paper on Iraq on his website. It denounces the economic sanctions as genocidal, which they are, but he also denounces Reagan and Bush I for not imposing sanctions on Iraq earlier, when he was a U.S. ally. Aronowitz’s current program includes the elimination of all economic sanctions – but also “the retention of all military sanctions, including prohibiting the use of revenues from oil-related sales for the purchase of military-related supplies and equipment.” That is, he thinks the U.S. has the right to decide Iraq’s economic and military policy, and that Iraq has no right to defend itself. In the name of opposing war, he pushes a less aggressive imperialism.

One of the larger demonstration builders is the International Socialist Organization, which in theory claims to oppose the Iraq war on anti-imperialist grounds (although it seems to have dropped the word “imperialist” from its paper, to appeal to a largely liberal, middle-class movement audience). But the ISO is supporting Aronowitz as “the only anti-war candidate” who is running to “take on corporate power, defend the environment, attack racism and advocate for economic and social justice.”

The ISO is therefore supporting an openly imperialist candidate – and it is doing so on the issue of the Iraq war on which the candidate has an openly imperialist position. Far from taking the revolutionary position of defending Iraq against attack, it is backhandedly supporting a disguised imperialist attack.

The task of genuine revolutionaries is not just to “build the movement,” although we are of course in favor of the largest and strongest anti-war protests possible. We need also to fight for them to be built as genuine united fronts, where all voices are heard, including that of revolutionaries – not just those who support the Democrats and other pro-imperialist liberals. We also fight within the movement for revolutionary proletarian leadership, so that it points to a lasting challenge to capitalist attacks and imperialist war. Otherwise it will lose momentum if the U.N. signs on to the U.S.’s demands, and could dissipate when U.S. ground troops go in, as happened in 1991.

SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IS THE ONLY SOLUTION!

World-wide struggles can stop Washington’s war against Iraq, just as struggles by the workers and oppressed can stop the capitalists’ day-to-day attacks at home. But capitalism relies on brutal exploitation and oppression to survive. As the world economy slides toward another great depression, capitalism will turn to all its tested methods of mass unemployment, starvation and dictatorship, to continue its rule. Even if this war is stopped, capitalism inevitably drives toward one imperialist war after another. This is the nightmarish future capitalism offers.

But capitalism also inevitably drives the masses to revolt, and that is the hope for a future liberated from capitalism’s horrors. Necessary for victory, however, is a revolutionary proletarian party to lead the struggle. The workers and oppressed do not need saviors from on high; they will be their own liberators. The revolutionary party will be built by the most politically advanced workers and youth. We in the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), with our comrades abroad in the Communist Organization for the Fourth International (COFI), are dedicated to the task of building the international revolutionary party our class needs.●

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Theories of Stalinism's Collapse

by Walter Daum

The downfall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European Stalinist regimes just over a decade ago transformed the world scene. It brought a dramatic end to the Cold War period and inspired voluminous gloating about the “end of history” and the triumph of capitalism in a “New World Order.” It legitimized the neo-liberal free-market outlook, which was thereupon imposed on the ex-Stalinist states; this proved to be an economic disaster not only there but in most of the world as well.

The collapse also disoriented almost all the international far left, organizations and activists who consider themselves working-class revolutionaries. Many leftists were wedded to theories and beliefs that regarded the Soviet Union as socialist or as a workers' state; thus in their eyes its downfall represented a major defeat for Marxism as well. Others who recognized the Stalinist regimes as counterrevolutionary also became demoralized, because for several years afterwards the working-class audience for socialist ideas shrank significantly under the impact of the Stalinist collapse.

But now that the deepening economic turmoil in the U.S. and other imperialist states is calling capitalism's triumph into



Moscow, October 7, 1998: Russian coal miners join in massive demonstration protesting inflation and collapsing living standards.

question, openness to socialist ideas is reviving in the working class. That means that a renewed understanding of Stalinism is of vital importance. For it is impossible to understand the world today without understanding the role Stalinism played, both as a deformed form of capitalist exploitation and as a crucial prop for

the stability of capitalism on a world scale. Stalinism left us a legacy of two evils: the resuscitation of capitalism from its death agony in the 1930's, and the destruction of working-class consciousness of the proletarian alternative to capitalism.

Today contradictions reminiscent of those that brought Stalinism down are undermining the stability of capitalism as a whole. Moreover, the false solutions raised by the far left to the crisis of

Stalinism are again being put forward as the working-class answer to the mounting crisis of imperialism. For all these reasons, we revisit the debates over the class character and the downfall of the pseudo-socialist societies created under Stalinist rule.

STATIFIED CAPITALISM

Proletarian Revolution has since 1976 fought for the unique analysis of Stalinism of the League for the Revolutionary Party (and later the Communist Organization for the Fourth

Their Predictions and Ours

On the eve of the Stalinist collapse, here's what was said by leading representatives of the various theories of Stalinism discussed in this article.

Robert Brenner, a leader of the U.S. group Solidarity, speaking for the theory of bureaucratic collectivism:

The answer for the bureaucracy would presumably be capitalism Why don't they go that way? Because they are not a capitalist class. They are a ruling class based on the state, and there is no way in which those who are in the ruling class can simply tinker with the social system and turn themselves into capitalist private owners. (*Workers' Liberty*, Nos.12-13, 1989.)

Ernest Mandel, the foremost proponent of the deformed workers' state theory:

The main question in the political struggles underway is not the restoration of capitalism. ... In none of the bureaucratized workers' states does the petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie represent more than a small minority of the society. This element ... enjoys support, although quite limited, from international big capital. But overall this convergence will be insufficient to impose a restoration of capitalism in the short or medium term.

(*International Viewpoint*, Oct. 30, 1989.)

Mike Haynes, a theorist of Cliffite state capitalism, just two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall:

Although the Soviet economy may well be more inefficient and wasteful than the Western economy, these differences are matters of degree and the degree is often exaggerated The Soviet economy has shown sufficient drive to not only prevent the gap with the advanced West widening but to narrow it both absolutely and relatively. (*International Socialism* No. 34, 1987.)

In contrast, on the basis of our theory of statified capitalism, we wrote in this magazine in late 1988:

It is apparent that significant sections of the Stalinist ruling classes no longer have confidence in their economic system and are searching desperately for some route back to stability. ... The breakdown of the system confirms the analysis that *Proletarian Revolution* and the League for the Revolutionary Party have long championed: ... that the system has an inherent tendency to abandon its super-ficially centralized economic structure and to adopt traditional capitalist market forms. (“The Death Agony of Stalinism,” *PR* 33.)

International): that the USSR and the other pseudo-socialist states were transient forms of statified capitalism. Now others, including revolutionaries in the former USSR, have come to the same conclusion.

The Soviet workers' state was created in 1917 by the Bolshevik revolution. Its goal of socialism, a classless society offering abundance for all, depended on the spread of proletarian revolutions to the most advanced countries. But the Soviet Union barely survived the imperialist and Czarist armies that assaulted it in the four-year civil war that followed. The combined devastation of World War I and the civil war left the country even more backward than before; the proletariat, above all its revolutionary cadre, was decimated. Moreover, the defeat of the workers' revolutionary uprisings elsewhere in Europe isolated the Soviet state. The weakened Soviet state could not get rid of the trappings of capitalism, like exchange of commodities according to value and the wage system. As a consequence, during the 1920's the conservative bureaucracy led by Joseph Stalin consolidated its power at the head of the state and ruling Communist Party.

The degeneration accelerated in the 1930's. During the Great Purges in the latter half of the decade, the Stalinists wiped out the surviving revolutionary elements in the party and destroyed the officer corps of the Red Army. The essential core of the state power – its military, police and judicial arms – were purged and re-purged until all vestiges of Bolshevism were erased. Thus the state apparatus was smashed and reconstituted into a tool of the top bureaucracy – a new capitalist class, a regent class ruling in place of the destroyed bourgeoisie. That signified the completion of the counterrevolution: the workers' state was destroyed. Even though statified industry remained, once the Stalinist bureaucracy had set itself up as a ruling class, like capitalists anywhere it extracted surplus value from the workers through the mechanism of wage labor. The bastardized system that resulted we called “statified capitalism.”

Internationally, the post-World War II USSR nominally supported national liberation struggles against Western imperialism, working above all to prevent these movements from going beyond capitalist bounds. In Europe, it guaranteed the spheres of interest of the U.S. and other Western powers by restraining workers' struggles. Its role was key in squelching workers' revolutionary movements after the war. Thus, despite the Cold War rivalry between the USSR and the West, Stalinism upheld the world imperialist order headed by the U.S., while it carved out regional imperialist interests for itself.

This analysis is fully explained in our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism*. In this article we will review the question in the light of the collapse of the Stalinist system and the events of the post-Stalinist world, and take up some of the other theories falsely presented as Marxist.

THE COLLAPSE OF THEORY

The “Russian question” has been debated within the working class ever since 1917, but especially since the Stalinists took control in the USSR. Stalin, by then the de facto dictator, asserted in the 1930's that Soviet society was socialist, the first stage of the classless society, communism. This flew in the face of the materially based teachings of both Karl Marx, the founder of the communist movement, and Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Russian workers' revolution, that socialism required the elimination of scarcity; the Soviet workers' state could achieve socialism only through the spread of the proletarian revolution to the most advanced industrial countries.

Leon Trotsky, the leading communist oppositionist to

Stalinism's betrayal of the revolution, challenged Stalin's dogma with the analysis that a *political* counterrevolution had occurred: the workers' state had not been eliminated but was moving not toward socialism but back toward capitalism. The USSR under Stalin's bureaucracy had become a “degenerated workers' state”: it had removed the working class as a whole from the actual exercise of state power, undermined its revolutionary achievements and was on the road to restoring capitalist rule. Trotsky labeled the continuing counterrevolution a “preventive civil war” against the proletariat but did not draw our conclusion that the *social* counterrevolution had been completed; that is, that the class nature of the state changed from proletarian (albeit degenerated) to capitalist.

Contrary to Trotsky's prediction, rooted in his mistaken belief that the degenerated workers' state persisted, World War II led not to the end of Stalinism but rather its expansion, into Eastern Europe by Soviet conquest and into China and other Asian countries through revolutions by Stalinist parties not based in the working class. Independent workers' uprisings in several countries were crushed. The Stalinists first ruled through popular-front coalitions with traditional bourgeois parties. Only when the working class had been contained and decapitated did the Stalinists consolidate their regimes of statified capitalism.

The Trotskyist movement, the Fourth International (FI), was in disarray after World War II. (Trotsky himself had been killed on Stalin's orders on the eve of the war.) It adapted to the middle-class milieu that grew rapidly in the imperialist countries during the post-war boom. The triumphs of Stalinism infected it with the cynicism toward proletarian revolution common among the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. Whereas Trotsky had considered the Stalinist and social-democratic reformists to be counterrevolutionary enemies of working-class socialism, the FI adapted to these milieus in Western Europe; they were seen as progressives whose vision just didn't go all the way to socialist revolution. From there it was but a short step to the notion that the Stalinists in Eastern Europe and elsewhere could carry out the socialist revolution if they were “prodded” by the mass struggle.

On the new regimes in Eastern Europe, the FI had first said, accurately, that they were state capitalist. But this set up a contradiction in that the USSR, with much the same economic structure, was still supposed to be a workers' state. Then, several years after the fact, the “orthodox” majority led by Michel Pablo resolved the contradiction by deciding that they had become workers' states, “deformed” rather than degenerated since the working class had never conquered power. How states created by crushing the working class could be workers' states of any kind was never seriously explained. Nor could all the Pabloite orthodoxists agree on just when the new workers' states in Europe were created: when the Soviet Army “liberated” them from their previous Nazi conquerors in 1944-45, or when the Communist Parties consolidated sole power some years later. (Chapter 7 of our book has a detailed discussion of these issues; see also “Stalinism and the Fourth International” in *PR* 64.)

Several minority groupings among the Trotskyists objected to these brain-twisting denials of Marxism. James Cannon, the leader of the American SWP, wrote:

I don't think you can change the class character of the state by manipulations at the top. It can only be done by a revolution which is followed by a fundamental change in property relations. ... If you once begin to play with the idea that the class nature of the state can be changed by manipulations in top circles, you open the door to all kinds of revisions of basic theory. (*SWP Internal Bulletin*, October 1949.)

Ernest Mandel, the chief Trotskyist theorist in Europe, had likewise correctly insisted:

We will continue, until we have sufficient proof to the contrary, to consider as absurd the theories of a ... degenerated workers' state being installed in a country where there has not previously been a proletarian revolution. (*Fourth International*, 1947.)

Shortly afterward Cannon and Mandel both went along with these revisions and absurdities and swallowed the deformed workers' state travesty.

Other dissidents tried to resolve the contradiction in other ways. Some developed theories that the USSR and its imitators were state capitalist, describing the exploitation of the Soviet workers and other Stalinist crimes. C.L.R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya came closest to a fully Marxist understanding by beginning to analyze how capitalism's law of value operated in the USSR. Tony Cliff labeled the system state capitalist but insisted that it lacked wage labor and the law of value. Max Shachtman and others agreed that Stalinism did not follow capitalist laws and therefore was a new non-capitalist exploitative society called bureaucratic collectivism.

Other faults aside, none of these currents dealt adequately with the historical dimension of the "regime change" in the USSR: how and when had the Soviet workers' state been done away with? Trotsky's analysis of the "degenerated workers' state" was the necessary starting point. Yet James-Dunayevskaya, Cliff and Shachtman all rejected the very concept of a degenerated workers' state – that a workers' state could be reversed in its course and be hurled backward toward capitalism. They all said or implied that the Stalinists had ended the workers' state the moment they consolidated power in the 1920's or early 1930's.

A key to this question that they did not grasp is that capitalist forms are inherent within a workers' state. Marx and Lenin stressed that a workers' state is not yet socialism but transitional to it; it is a "bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie." Thus the early USSR started off as a battleground between capitalism's blindly operating, anarchic laws of motion (summed up as the law of value) and conscious proletarian direction.

The three formulas that held sway among self-styled Trotskyists – deformed workers' state, bureaucratic collectivism, and Cliff's state capitalism – were in fact variants of a common theory. They all denied the centrality of the law of value under Stalinism because they regarded value to be determined by exchange on the market, not by the exploitation of workers in production. All three held that the only economic regulator was the allegedly conscious planning by the ruling bureaucracies.

Versions of these theories continue to the present day. None could explain how the Stalinist system worked or account for its demise. They could neither predict nor account for (in some cases, not even admit) the weakening of the Stalinist system that led to its collapse; indeed, they all saw it as stronger and more dynamic than Western capitalism, for better or for worse. That left them floundering and ultimately capitulatory when it came to intervening in the class struggles that erupted.

THE THEORY OF COLLAPSE

Stalinism survived as a world power for almost a half-century after World War II. Yet up until the very end, almost all observers, right and left, thought the Soviet system would remain essentially intact for decades. Bourgeois spokesmen in the West had previously exaggerated the economic strength of the USSR for several reasons: to justify the enormous imperialist military

build-up, and to suppress the class struggle at home in the face of a powerful external opponent. After the fall, they proclaimed the virtues of "democracy" and the "free market" and promised that these fictions would bring the region out of its doldrums. This was hardly a disinterested opinion, since Western imperialists shared in the looting of the former Russian empire that accelerated when Boris Yeltsin came to power in late 1991.

Left analysts did little better. The "orthodox Trotskyists," led by Mandel of the United Secretariat tendency (USec), regarded the Stalinist states as progressive with respect to capitalism. They hailed the initially high growth rates in Russia and Eastern Europe after the war without recognizing that these were temporary, as in much of the traditional capitalist world. Thus they were caught by surprise when the system's internal rot set the stage for its collapse. After the fall, despite their common theory, they could not agree on whether or when the ex-Stalinist states had become capitalist. The "theory" turned out to be no basis for analysis but simply a name for societies that once had seemed free of capitalism's crises.

The main state capitalist current, Tony Cliff's International Socialist Tendency (IST), saw statified economy as the more dynamic culmination of capitalism's centralizing tendencies and therefore interpreted Stalinism as capitalism's future development, which had already superseded imperialism as the system's highest stage. Thus they could not foresee the rulers' drive to privatization. The IST theorists changed their view only when the crisis of the system became apparent, but they did not account for their 180-degree turn.

The bureaucratic collectivists likewise thought of Stalinism as the wave of the future; they saw the world locked in a titanic struggle between two counterposed systems, with Stalinism the more dynamic. The dominant wing led by Max Shachtman originally thought Stalinism to be progressive with respect to capitalism because of its collectivized property; finally they decided that since capitalism stood for democracy (ignoring above all the reality of the colonial and ex-colonial countries) and therefore chose to side with Western imperialism.

Our theory, in contrast, allowed us to predict the lines of Stalinism's crisis. When this magazine was first published in 1976, we argued that important working-class gains survived the counterrevolution – the full nationalization of industry, the right to a job, housing, health care, etc. These retentions hampered full-scale capitalist exploitation, and therefore the Stalinist rulers would be driven to adopt Western-style capitalist methods: market competition, mass unemployment, rapid inflation and other open attacks on working-class conditions. That is, the mounting economic stagnation of the Stalinist societies would force them to devolve in the direction of traditional capitalism.

CRISIS EAST AND WEST

Chapter 5 of our book has a further explanation of the "permanent crisis" that post-war Stalinism found itself in. Traditional capitalism goes through cycles of booms and busts, triggered by overproduction crises that periodically occur because independent capitalists are collectively driven to accumulate means of production beyond what the economic system can tolerate. In the depression phase of the cycle, the most backward and weakest capitals are wiped out and workers' living standards are forced downward, thereby allowing profitability to revive and the expansion phase to begin.

The Stalinist system of statified capitalism, however, prevented the elimination of obsolete industries, so crises could not be resolved. Production would continue with inefficient methods

but at steadily declining rates. In the USSR, for example, party leader Mikhail Gorbachev's top economic adviser, Abel Aganbegyan, admitted in the mid-1980's that Soviet per capita growth rates had been at zero for years. The Stalinist ruling classes saw their economies falling ever further behind the Western imperialist powers and facing increasingly antagonistic working classes. Hence their urgent turn to creeping privatization and pseudo-democratic reforms.

One theme of our book is that the economic breakdown of



Vladivostok, January 1998. Workers across Russia blocked railroad tracks demanding unpaid wages. Placard reads: "We cannot look into the eyes of our hungry children. We have nothing to lose."

Stalinism results from tendencies similar to those operative in the West. The imperial capitalists are wary of a re-run of the Great Depression of the 1930's; such an upheaval would exacerbate the existing imperialist rivalries and undermine working-class acquiescence to capitalist rule. Since World War II they have resorted to various forms of state intervention into the economy to dampen their system's crises and forestall depression. These measures led to the build-up of an enormous bubble of fictitious capital, which now is beginning to deflate and contribute to the crisis it was meant to prevent. (See our pamphlet *The Specter of Economic Collapse*.)

The opening up of Eastern European and ex-Soviet economies to public scrutiny revealed that, even more than previously believed, the Stalinists had lived parasitically off their own capital as well as human and natural resources. Fixed capital was exhausted without replacement; environmental degradation was horrendous; industrial workers had significantly shorter life expectancies in the East. In the West, the bubble of fictitious capital partly derives from failing to replace fixed capital, thereby counting used-up capital as surplus value. Though not as pervasive yet in the Western countries as in the East, and not as devastating as in the superexploited "third world," this tendency is typical of capitalism everywhere in its epoch of decay.

Our theory points to the collapse of Stalinism as the harbinger of economic upheavals in the capitalist world as a whole. Much of the far left in contrast saw Stalinism's fall as a world-historical defeat for the proletariat which could give Western imperialism a new lease on life. No doubt Western financiers leeches plenty of surplus-value from the workers and resources of the East. But after a ten-year binge the contradictions of the

system are now looming even more powerfully.

THE ROLE OF THE PROLETARIAT

The economic crisis and growing inequality underlay the events that opened up in 1989. Working-class resistance, notably the massive Polish workers' upheaval of 1980-81, had undermined the self-confidence of the Stalinist ruling classes and destroyed their hold over society – showing once again the centrality of the proletariat for social progress in the present epoch, a fundamental teaching of Marxism. The Interfactory Strike Committees created by the Polish workers in August 1980 were echoes of the Russian soviets of 1905 and 1917 (the basis of the workers' seizure of state power in 1917), the Hungarian workers' councils of 1956, and many similar bodies erected whenever workers' have risen in revolutionary struggle against their capitalist overlords. (The momentous events in Poland were described and analyzed in depth in Nos. 10-16 of *Socialist Voice*, the predecessor of this magazine.)

Throughout the Stalinist realm, the workers' struggles were triggered by the ruling-class compulsion to intensify exploitation, which itself stems from the underlying laws of motion of the capitalist system discovered by Marx. As our book explains, these laws applied to the stratified capitalist states of the East as well as to the "normal" capitalist societies of the West.

The flight from state ownership, in the West as well as the East, reflects the fact that stratified property inherently embodies elements of working-class gains; it hinders the all-out exploitation that the capitalists need. The wave of privatization schemes in East Europe, China and the ex-USSR were aimed at strengthening capitalist rule internationally as well as nationally.

The working classes had dealt the hated Stalinists decisive blows, but even though past upsurges had taken on unmistakably working-class forms (strikes, factory occupations, etc.), in the events that opened up in 1989 the protesting workers were led by middle-class elements, in some cases dissenting Stalinist officials. As we wrote in early 1990:

These mass revolutions are historic achievements, yet they are only partial victories. Governments have fallen, but the underlying social relations of exploitation remain. ...

Although the working classes have been the real muscle behind the uprooting of Stalinism even when other social forces took the lead, the danger is that they will be trapped into following the middle-class reformers. ...

East Europe is only at the beginning of the revolutionary process. In the coming months we will see governments rise and fall, unable to stave off economic collapse and deal with continual mass upheaval. However, if the economic power of the bureaucracy and its new reformist and Western bourgeois allies is not broken, the workers of East Europe will see their revolutions turned against them, and they will become victims of even deeper exploitation than before. ("Revolution Sweeps East Europe," *PR* 36.)

The key factor missing was a revolutionary leadership – a proletarian party – that could have clearly exposed the class nature and political roles of the Stalinists and the reformist oppositions and outlined a program to show the workers the way to a genuine workers' state. Without such a party, the struggles against Stalinism were usurped by forces drawn from the Stalinists themselves and from bourgeois elements that their decaying system had nourished.

To preserve their class rule in the face of devastating economic crises and working-class unrest, sections of the ruling class engineered a counter-revolt, yielding a share of state and

New Ruling Class from Old

The devolution of the Soviet economy towards destatification was already well under way before Yeltsin and even Gorbachev took power. The perpetrators were leading members of the already-existing ruling bureaucracy. Here is one description:

By the 1980s the local managers of the state economy were well on their way to becoming de-facto owners – “stakeholders,” the academic literature delicately calls them. Meanwhile, society as a whole was becoming less closely controlled. A shadow economy was growing strongly, outside state controls. Virtually all Russians bought private goods and services “on the left,” that is, through a black market of friends and connections. There were already underground millionaires, and mafia gangsters to prey on them. ...

The second revolutionary event was the massive transfer of wealth from the state into private hands. In the space of a few years – roughly beginning in 1988 – literally hundreds of billions of dollars flowed from state properties to private entrepreneurs and companies, most of them connected in some way with the previous state enterprises and ministries. A class of super-wealthy individuals and conglomerates sprang up overnight. Never in human history, perhaps, has there been such a dramatic and sudden transfer of wealth, other than through military conquest. (Thane Gustafson, *Capitalism, Russian-Style*,; pp.18, 26.)

Another account:

When Russia began privatizing its state industry in 1992, the rules were fixed so that the factory bosses were assured of being able to buy their own factories cheaply. This meant, in practice, that little changed when a factory was privatized, except that managers had more of a free hand to strip it of cash and assets that caught their fancy. Many who had been managers under the Communist regime became rich. (Robert Cottrel, “Russia: Was There a Better Way?”, *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 4, 2001.)

These descriptions (and numerous others) demonstrate that the bureaucratic rulers were metamorphosing into a bourgeoisie, not defending nationalized property as the Pabloite theory predicted they must do.

economic power to the growing “private” bourgeois wing. In several countries of Eastern Europe, the rulers hijacked popular movements to preserve their class rule. In others, including the USSR, the transformations were pre-emptive. In all cases the Stalinist system of statified capitalism gave way to a hybrid system that allowed the ruling class to wipe out most of the remnants of the working-class gains which it had previously been compelled to preserve under the false name of socialism.

As a result, in Russia and the other states of the former USSR, the workers suffered a catastrophe: manufacturing jobs disappeared, wages went unpaid, health care was destroyed and mortality rates have risen rapidly. In Eastern Europe, the conditions of the workers have also worsened, if not as drastically (war-ridden ex-Yugoslavia excepted). But the terrible decline in workers’ living standards had begun well before the fall of the Communist Party regimes. There were severe shortages of consumer goods, diseases from environmental poisoning and alco-

holism were rampant, infant mortality was rising and life expectancy declining. The regime changes of 1989-91 did not initiate these horrors; they added more.

POLITICAL REVOLUTIONS

The fact that the Stalinist societies turned openly capitalist without the state being smashed confirms our analysis that the class nature of the state did not change – Stalinism was capitalist to begin with. (See box on p. 29.) Thus the transformations of 1989- 91 that consolidated the new regimes were *political* revolutions: the underlying system of exploitation remained capitalist, but dominant power within the ruling class shifted to an overlapping wing of the same class. The new regimes turned the momentum of the mass struggle against the masses themselves and destroyed what remained of the gains that the workers had held on to for decades, even in woefully deformed conditions.

In this light they completed certain steps that the Stalinist social counterrevolution had been unable to carry out when it smashed the Soviet workers’ state in the 1930’s. In contrast to the dismantling of the state apparatus at that time, in the political overturns of 1989-91 the state apparatus and personnel remained much the same. The Soviet Union’s vast army, five million troops stationed from Berlin to Vladivostok, did not move to preserve either the Soviet empire in 1989 or the Soviet Union itself in 1991. That is because it remained the arm of the ruling class that was striving to bourgeoisify its methods of rule. In Poland, the defense minister reappointed by the coalition regime between the retreating Stalinists and the wing of the Solidarity movement led by Lech Walesa was General Florian Siwicki. He was eager for his forces to adapt as the “form of state” changed:

“Now it depends on each of us, all Poles, whether we will be equal to the challenges of the future.” These included “the formation of a democratic, parliamentary and civil form of state. In backing the changes taking place in the state, we are also changing the shape of the army.” (*New York Times*, Aug. 29, 1989.)

The “democratic, parliamentary and civil” state is code talk for private property. The military apparatus could so easily adapt because the old regime, like the new, defended capitalist exploitation. Whether this occurs primarily through state or private property is of secondary importance. In either case the state belongs to the exploiters and exists to repress the workers.

China too has been undergoing a major transformation from statified capitalism to a combination of private and state capital. The Tiananmen movement in 1989 went far beyond its obvious student aspect to reach deeply into the working class. Its crushing by military force enabled the regime to carry through “reforms” that could not have been imposed previously. The Communist Party bureaucracy kept its hold on the state and engineered the growth of a substantial non-state economy along with slashing attacks on the jobs, income and rights of workers in state-run industries.

THE KEY: REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

The “revolutions” in the name of freedom devastated the working classes and drove them into a period of comparative passivity. For the East European workers had shown their power in many uprisings against Stalinism – from East Berlin in 1953 to Gdansk in 1980 – and had raised hopes among working-class fighters everywhere that they would find the way to overthrow the Stalinist system and replace it with genuine workers’ states. That no revolutionary workers’ parties were built is largely due to the historical fact that the Stalinists, in the massive purges that

helped put the Soviet workers' state to death in the 1930's, had wiped out the remaining leadership that still stood for the goals of the October revolution of 1917. Similarly, in East Europe in the 1940's, the Stalinists who rode the Soviet army to power eliminated those genuine revolutionaries who had survived the Nazi conquest.

A significant share of the blame for the failure of a proletarian revolutionary alternative to emerge also lies with those organizations which claimed to stand for Trotskyism. Their capitulations in theory and practice meant that no serious force was articulating and fighting for the program of working-class revolution on the world scene. In the 1960's and '70's, many of them looked to student movements, peasant-based guerrillas and/or social-democratic and Stalinist forces for revolutionary advances. They dropped these notions because of their dismal failure, but their underlying class attitudes and the theories that reflect them remain the same to this day. Some of the pseudo-Trotskyist groups had affiliates in the ex-USSR and East Europe and were able to play a small but disastrous role. Cynical about the capacity of the working class to take power in its own name, they muddled along with theories that saw either the old Stalinist or the new "democratic" regimes as progressive.

Thus workers in the USSR and Eastern Europe saw no revolutionary alternative leadership to Stalinism or traditional capitalism. Consequently, their revolts led them into the hands of the new bourgeois post-Stalinist leaders before they could generate a new revolutionary world view and vanguard leadership. Authentic Marxists do not glorify the immediate consciousness of the working class. The communist program may not be popular at a given moment, but it is not an artificial ideology: it arises out of the objective needs of the proletariat. As class struggles

deepen, the most advanced workers become conscious of their program and tasks and organize themselves into the kernel of a revolutionary proletarian party; they thereby give leadership to the rest of their class and other oppressed layers of the population. Creation of a proletarian party is the only "stage" that is a genuine prerequisite for socialist revolution.

The reason for debating the class character of the Soviet Union is not to score theoretical points but to re-establish the centrality for socialism of the conscious, revolutionary proletariat – a class that consciously struggles to create a new society. Leftists who look to other classes, to saviors from on high, are not just rejecting the central teaching of Marxism. They are preparing to mislead workers into following the neo-Stalinists and social democrats whose job is to set them up for increased oppression and exploitation.

THE YELTSIN COUP

Marxists who believe that the USSR and allied states were non-capitalist before 1989 but are capitalist now have to ask the question for each country: when did the counterrevolution occur? We have already mentioned that the orthodox Trotskyists in the 1940's had considerable trouble with the "date question" of that time: when did the countries of East Europe, China, etc. become workers' states? The reverse problem after 1989 was equally troublesome.

In the USSR, Yeltsin's counter-coup was the key event in the Communist Party's ouster from power. In that conflict between wings of the bureaucratic capitalist ruling class, the Stalinist "hard-liners" led by Vice-President Gennady Yanaev attempted to seize sole power and end Gorbachev's delicate balance of power between them and the more rapid privatizers. The coup posed an acute danger to the working class, since its leaders announced an immediate ban on strikes and a retraction of the limited democratic gains yielded by Gorbachev in the "glasnost" (openness) campaign of the previous half-decade. So revolutionary workers would have opposed the coup and would have tactically lined up in a military bloc with Yeltsin to defeat the immediate threat to workers' interests.

As a matter of principle revolutionaries could give no political support to either wing of the capitalist ruling class. But we could tactically and momentarily defend one side in a civil war or armed conflict if we judged the other side to be the more acute threat to the working class. That was the Bolsheviks' method in defending the reactionary Kerensky against the reactionary Kornilov in 1917, and likewise Trotsky's in defending the bourgeois Spanish Republic against the fascists in 1936. Our position was to give "military support" to the Yeltsin side. That is, we were for workers pointing their guns against Yanaev at that moment, while warning that the working class would have to take on Yeltsin soon after. Indeed, after the coup was defeated Yeltsin and Gorbachev signed a pact which, among other things, tried to ban strikes. And Yeltsin, like Yanaev, expressed the opinion that Pinochet in Chile was his model.

When the hard-liners' revolt fizzled out, Gorbachev's balancing act collapsed and Yeltsin emerged on top. His triumph ushered in a period of undisguised capitalist looting that enriched a handful and impoverished millions. Even though the Yanaev team was also dedicated to "free-market" reforms, its expected course was slower. Thus any deformed workers-statist should have defended the Yanaev side, despite its immediate threat to crush the workers as a matter of principle, not just tactics. Yet few did. Most backed Yeltsin on dubious democratic grounds, proving one more time that their workers' state theory is empty phrase-mongering.

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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CLIFF AND THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

For practically all theorists of Stalinism, their failure to anticipate its downfall has not prevented them from claiming that the collapse confirmed their views. We will take up a number of different Marxist theories and currents in order to challenge their claims.

In 1990, Tony Cliff's sidekick Chris Harman described the fall of Stalinism as follows:

The transition from state capitalism to multinational capitalism is neither a step forward nor a step backward but a step sideways. The change involves only a shift from one form of exploitation to another form for the working class as a whole, even though some individual groups of workers ... find themselves better placed to improve their conditions and others ... find their conditions worsened.
(*International Socialism* No. 46, 1990.)

In 1998 Cliff published an article called "The Test of Time" to assert that his theory of state capitalism had been vindicated. In it he repeated the "step sideways" analysis. It is remotely conceivable that in 1990 observers could have overlooked the threat to all workers' rights and living standards that were entailed in the privatization and looting of state property. But not by the end of the decade. Cliff & Co. never accepted that any working-class gains had survived under Stalinism and thus looked on complacently as they went down the drain.

The Stalinist changeover proved the IST's theory wrong in all essential particulars. Cliff explained the Stalinist economy as in effect a single capitalist firm without the law of value or competition operating internally. (We said in our book that Cliff's theory was in fact not a theory of capitalism but was rather bureaucratic collectivism in disguise.) Hence for Cliff, cyclical crises of overproduction were ruled out. Cliff cited the early Soviet theorist Nikolai Bukharin, who reasoned that the driving economic force under state capitalism is the consumption needs of the ruling class; since these needs are physically limited, economic growth under such a system would stagnate.

Cliff argued, however, that the Soviet economy had avoided the "Bukharin 'solution'" because it had an additional driving force, its need for arms production. This was "a means to acquire new capital and new possibilities of accumulation." (*State Capitalism in Russia*, 1988 edition, pp.243-4.) Cliff saw arms spending as a huge economic boost rather than a temporary shot in the arm; in reality it is an enormous drain on any economy, especially a stagnating one. Not only consumption goods but also capital goods lagged behind the rates in the West. The Soviet Union's strenuous but doomed attempts to keep up in the arms race with the U.S. was the final straw forcing the system's collapse. (A critique of the various versions of the IST's "permanent arms economy" theory is in Chapter 7 of our book.) Cliff's failure to see Stalinism's internal laws and contradictions, leading to relative weakness and economic anarchy, followed from the notion that it represented a higher stage of capitalism, that conscious planning was actually the driving force. He wrote in his main theoretical work, originally published in 1955:

From a state-owned and planned economy there can be no retracing of steps to an anarchic, private-ownership economy. ... The replacement of large-scale state industry with private industry would be a technical-economic regression.
(*State Capitalism in Russia*, p.273.)

In more recent years, the Cliffite theorists were forced to recognize the fact of Stalinism's crisis. But they did not grasp that the system was in mortal trouble. (See box, p.29.) The fundamental error in the IST theory was that they did not see that



Chinese billboard depicting Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, on eve of Communist Party Congress, November 2002. Congress officially admitted "entrepreneurs" to the party, in effect recognizing its own capitalist nature.

Stalinism was a bastard form of capitalism deformed by its inability to destroy major revolutionary gains of the working class. They saw it as only an extreme form of capitalism and were blind to the system's fundamental weakness as well as to the reality that the workers had some vestiges of 1917 to defend.

THE DEFORMED WORKERS-STATISTS

The major deformed workers' state theorists also saw Stalinism as stable, in their case arguing that the "workers' states" did not face the "restoration" of capitalism. By maintaining that capitalism was not a danger, Mandel and his co-thinkers could afford to blend in with liberal reformers of Stalinism – and thereby mislead the advanced workers who heeded them.

For the entire period between World War II and the fall of Stalinism, Mandel and Cliff had engaged in a running debate over the nature of Stalinism as the leading theorists in the broad milieu that defined itself as adhering or sympathetic to Trotskyism. That both of their analyses proved disastrously wrong reflects in the final analysis the middle-class outlook of the milieu. As if to prove this, both of their tendencies tailed middle-class saviors in the struggle against Stalinism in the days of its collapse. The leading example was Poland, where Mandel's USec and Cliff's IST both supported the government of Stalinists and former Solidarity advisers when it was administering post-Stalinist austerity capitalism in 1990. (See "The Left and East Europe," *PR* 36.)

Some orthodox Trotskyists make the argument that the immense setbacks to the workers in the post-Stalinist countries prove that these states have changed their class character. But this claim runs directly counter to the Marxist theory of the state. If the Stalinist states had been workers' states, however deformed, overthrowing them had to mean smashing the state apparatus. (See box on p. 36.) How do the same armed forces now defend capitalist property, when they defended "proletarian" property just before? And why must a major defeat of the working class require a social, not just a political, defeat? The Nazi rise to power in Germany in 1933 was violently destructive of workers' institutions, but it was a political counterrevolution within the compass of capitalist rule.

Moreover, if the Stalinist states were workers' states, why did the rulers, who according to the deformed workers' state theory had their own *inherent* caste interest in defending state property, choose instead to privatize state property? Why did the disputes among the Stalinist rulers occur over the speed of destitution and not over the aim itself?

Deformed workers' state believers have always been torn between two opposing currents. On one side, tendencies like Workers World in the U.S. and the Spartacists defended the Stalinists against the workers in the name of defending the "workers' states." On the other side, Mandel & Co. took the middle-class reformist "dissidents" who had misled the workers' organization Solidarity as the genuine leaders of the working class. The most telling condemnation of the entire "orthodox" milieu is that in the half-century of their "deformed workers' states," not one of them wrote a serious theoretical analysis, much less a book, explaining the laws of motion of such a society and justifying a designation that has such obvious contradictions. The theory was no guide to action because there was no theory.

THE SPARTACIST TENDENCY

The Spartacists had a particularly hard time deciding when the Soviet "workers' state" had been lost. They announced retroactively in late 1992 that counterrevolution had won some time before, exactly when remained unclear. (See "Spartacists Terminate Russian 'Workers' State' Not with a Bang but a Whimper, *PR* 43.) A "theory" that allows its proponents to overlook the downfall of a "workers' state" – the land of the

Bolshevik revolution, no less – when the decisive events occur in plain view of all the world, is useless for the working class.

The Spartacists supported hard-line Stalinists against the workers when they defended the Berlin Wall (which was used to imprison East German workers, who were shot if they attempted to cross it) and applauded the Polish Stalinists' crackdown on the ten million workers in 1982. They should have had no trouble supporting the Yanaev coup against Gorbachev in 1991. But this time they took no sides. They went through theoretical contortions to avoid doing so, for one reason because that would have meant admitting that their arch-rivals, the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT), who did support Yanaev, had been "right" when they were wrong. For all their trumpeting of their supposed Bolshevik allegiance to program, the Spartacists are often motivated by petty organizational needs.

The IBT's approach, however logical from a pro-Stalinist standpoint, is no more consistent. The reasoning that led the IBT to defend Yanaev against Yeltsin should also have led them to defend Ceausescu in Romania in December 1989 – against not only the Stalinist reformers who took over power but also against the popular uprising that Ceausescu savagely repressed. After all, it was the reformers who destroyed the "workers' state" by weak-

And a Peaceful Counterrevolution Was Had by All

Those who believe the fall of Stalinism meant a change in class rule have a problem: with the exception of Romania, the changes in regime occurred peacefully without destroying the state apparatus. Such an idea runs directly counter to the Marxist understanding that the state is the property of a ruling class that defends its power and privileges using a monopoly of force. Yet "Trotskyists" of all stripes have argued that peaceful social revolutions that did not smash the workers' state are just what happened in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

WORKERS POWER

Workers Power has attempted a theoretical justification of this notion, as we have noted previously in this magazine. They posed the dilemma themselves when Stalinist East Germany was swallowed up by bourgeois West Germany:

Does [East Germany] prove that a peaceful overthrow of a workers' state is possible? If the answer is yes, and we believed it must be at least for Eastern Europe, this appears to bring us into head-on collision with Trotsky. (*Workers Power*, July 1990.)

The LRCI lawyers tried to resolve the problem by quoting as a precedent a comment by Trotsky on the new constitution Stalin imposed on the USSR in 1936:

The new constitution seals the dictatorship of the privileged strata of Soviet society over the producing masses, thereby making the peaceful dying away of the state an impossibility, and opens up for the bureaucracy "legal" roads for the economic counterrevolution, that is, the restoration of capitalism by means of a "cold stroke." (Trotsky, *Writings 1935-36*, p.358.)

Of course, Trotsky was not suggesting that the counter revolution could be peaceful. He was saying, first, that the bureaucracy's political counterrevolution had been completed and had closed off hope for a peaceful transition to socialism. And second, that the new constitution provided a legal facade for the

capitalist, or social, counterrevolution. Workers Power legalistically reads a "cold stroke" to mean non-violence. But as Trotsky wrote a year later, "Without a victorious civil war the bureaucracy cannot give birth to a new ruling class." (*Writings 1937-38*, p.37.)

When LRCI first came up with their rationalization for rejecting Marxism on the state, it applied only to East Germany, for they contended that the other post-Stalinist states remained workers' states with one or another modifying adjective. But in 2000, when they abandoned their "moribund workers' states" and admitted that Russia et al. were capitalist, they boasted that they were not "thrown" by the admission of counterrevolutions that smash no state.

We have already recognized that the restoration does not require a "smashing" of the state. The social counterrevolution took place peacefully. Under Stalinism the bureaucratic-military apparatus already had a bourgeois form: unlike a genuine revolutionary working-class state, it had a standing army, secret police, unelected officials. All that was necessary was for a new government committed to capitalism to assume control within the commanding circles of this state power. (*Capitalist Restoration and the State*, LRCI website, November 2000.)

In other words, the same state apparatus can serve two contending classes, depending on the intentions of its leaders. This is precisely the Pabloite theory of deformed workers' revolutions in reverse. It smashes Marxism, not the state.

THE SPARTACISTS

Workers Power was soon followed by the Spartacist League. The SL's chief theoretician, Joseph Seymour, had once written straightforwardly:

Capitalist restoration cannot occur either through gradual evolution or a mere reshuffling of personnel at the top; it requires a violent counterrevolution. ... Capitalist

ening the Stalinist state machine, and it was Ceausescu who for all his crimes – including an unswerving devotion to paying off Romania’s debts to the imperialists at the cost of feeding the population – who was bent on preserving state property in order to defend his own power and loot. But in defending his own property he was defending nationalized property, and therefore in the eyes of the IBT and SL, the “workers’ state.” Opportunistically, because it would have meant defending a particularly odious Stalinist butcher, neither the Spartacists nor the IBT took the position consistent with their pro-Stalinist principles.

More recently the Spartacists tried once again to come up with a theoretical explanation for the demise of the Stalinist “workers’ states.” “Six decades of bureaucratic misrule ... had produced a deep political cynicism among the working masses of the Soviet Union,” they wrote, thereby blaming the working class while prettifying the counterrevolutionary regime as “misrule.” (*Workers Vanguard*, Aug. 6, 1999.) To cover their own history of admiring Stalinist “planning,” they lied that they had long understood Soviet economic retardation with respect to the West:

In 1960, Khrushchev challenged the capitalist West. “We will bury you,” proclaiming that the USSR would not only

restoration could triumph only through a civil war in which the class-conscious elements of the proletariat were annihilated in the course of their bitter struggle to defend collectivized property ... (*Why the USSR is Not Capitalist*, pp. 62-64.)

But after the Stalinist fall, acting as the Spartacists’ legal adviser, Seymour sought new precedents. Trotsky, he now found, had suggested in 1928 that a capitalist military coup was possible in the USSR and “projected that such an overturn need not provoke a full-scale civil war.” But he admitted that Trotsky never returned to such a scenario once the Stalinists had set up their police state. (*Spartacist* Winter 1990-91, pp.5-6.) The Spartacists at this point had not determined that the Stalinist states had already become bourgeois; they held that the governments but not the states in Eastern Europe were capitalist, and insisted that violent convulsions would be necessary to finish the job. Seymour added that in the USSR the victory of a bourgeois government, not just a state, would likely require violence: “it is difficult to envision the capitalist-restorationist forces achieving governmental power short of civil war, as has occurred in East Europe.” (p.14.) In both the USSR and East Europe Seymour placed his prime faith in the Stalinist military and police to defend the “workers’ states.”

However, when the Spartacists finally revealed retroactively that capitalism had triumphed, there had been no civil-war-scale violence and the Stalinist military apparatus had not been smashed. They gave a nod to the Marxist theory of the state by opining that “the consolidation of this [capitalist] state through a big bloodbath – either a violent crackdown against the workers movement or a large-scale inter-ethnic conflict à la Yugoslavia – is likely in the near future.” But the counterrevolution had already happened. For the Spartacists, like LRCI, “regime change” from one class to another was possible without smashing the state.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

Neither LRCI nor the SL was the first to invent a peaceful counterrevolution. Tony Cliff of the IST had defended the idea

achieve global dominance over Western capitalism but also “full communism” in 20 years. He was here expressing the false consciousness of the Kremlin oligarchy.

But in fact the Spartacists themselves had loudly proclaimed Stalinism’s economic superiority. Like Mandel and so many other workers-state co-thinkers, they had argued the palpable nonsense that the Soviet economy was free of systemic crises and that it “insures the rapid and steady growth of productive forces” – even that the social structure of Russia under Lenin was “far more conducive to capitalist restoration” than under Brezhnev. (Quotes from the Spartacists’ 1977 pamphlet, *Why the USSR is Not Capitalist*, pp.59,90.) Another brilliant prediction!

They specifically boasted that the USSR had an 18 percent annual growth rate in 1974-5, at a time when the capitalist world was mired in depression. (p.58.) That miraculous figure was a complete lie; not even the Kremlin claimed such an achievement. We challenged the specific figure and the whole picture of Soviet economic superiority, citing the USSR’s declining growth rates, in *Socialist Voice* No. 4; they never replied or corrected the falsehood. Now they dismiss claims like their own as Stalinist “false consciousness.” For once they are right.

in his book long before. For Cliff, the restoration of capitalism had taken place in Russia around 1928. As with LRCI, he cited the passage from Trotsky about the “cold stroke,” claiming that through it Trotsky “withdrew the argument that a gradual change from a proletarian to a bourgeois state is ‘running backwards the film of reformism’.” Like the Spartacists, Cliff nodded to the Marxist theory of the state by pointing to the violent period of the Moscow trials in the late 1930’s, which he called, following Trotsky, “the civil war of the bureaucracy against the masses, a war in which only one side was armed and organized.” (*State Capitalism in Russia*, p.195-6.) But by then, according to the IST, the counterrevolution was a decade past.

After the Stalinist collapse, another IST leader, Alex Callinicos, tried to score a point against the orthodox Trotskyists by comparing the 1989-91 turnovers with the period when the IST says the workers’ state was overturned. “The 1989 revolutions ... were remarkable for the absence of large-scale social conflict and violence,” in contrast to “the savagery involved in the transformations wrought after 1928.” Cliff, he noted, “describes the 1930’s as a ‘civil war of the bureaucracy against the masses, a war in which only one side was armed and organized’.” (*The Revenge of History*, 1991; p.53.) Here Callinicos is making a feeble attempt to misquote Cliff and cover his abandonment of Marxism on the state. By attributing the civil war to “the 1930’s” rather than the Moscow trials, he tries to link the IST’s 1928 date directly to the later convulsions. It is another attempt to replace the truth by a lawyer’s argument. The fact remains that for the IST, the counterrevolution did not smash the workers’ state.

Workers Power brought the maneuver full circle. They commented on the Cliff-Callinicos point that dating the counterrevolution to 1989 would be tantamount to reformism: “It is clear that any charges of reformism leveled against Trotskyists today would also have to be leveled at Cliff’s original analysis of the 1920’s.” (“The Crisis of Stalinism and State Capitalist Theory,” *Permanent Revolution* No.9, 1991.)

That is, if the LRCI is reformist, so is the IST. Exactly. •

WORKERS POWER (LRCI)

The Workers Power group in Britain, backbone of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI), is one of the few workers-state tendencies that tries to justify its politics on the basis of theory; we have therefore analyzed and dissected their views several times. (On Stalinism, see *PR*'s 20, 21, 48 and 49.) But for all their attempts at theory, what distinguishes LRCI above all else is its predilection for changing its position on question after question.

When the USSR was breaking up, LRCI at first opposed independence for the non-Russian Soviet republics lest that weaken the Soviet "workers' state"; thus it supported Gorbachev's assault on Azerbaijan in early 1990. But when Moscow cracked down on Lithuania in 1991, LRCI flip-flopped and came out for self-determination, even though the Russian "bureaucratic conservative counterrevolution" was helping to prevent the changes that were decisive for restoring capitalism! A few years later, LRCI changed its mind several times over self-determination for Bosnia during the Yugoslav wars. (See *PR* 43.)

On the class nature of the post-Stalinist states, LRCI recently made its greatest flip-flop and probably retired for all time the world cup for centrist vacillation. When the openly bourgeois regimes had taken power, LRCI refused to accept the states as capitalist; they insisted that only political revolutions within the workers' states had occurred. They labeled the result "moribund workers' states." Here is how they explained what it would take to convince them that the societies were capitalist:

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

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

We commented in response:

WP and LRCI have taken their theory of the law of value to absurdity. ... Capitalism triumphs when the economy makes a decisive leap forward out of its slump under the "workers' state" – that is, for LRCI, capitalism solves the economic crisis that the proletarian state cannot handle! If taken seriously, this ought to mean that capitalism is progressive. (*PR* 48, 1995.)

We were even more right about the absurdity of this theory than we knew, because right after this passage we wrote: "Whatever was intended, for LRCI 'defense of the workers' states' clearly means defense of backwardness." But we overlooked at the time that for LRCI "moribund workers' states" were states that working-class revolutionaries were not obliged to defend in times of war. So not only were these "workers' states" that the working class never created and in which the workers did not have state power; there did not even exist remnants of socialist elements worth defending. LRCI called them workers' states only to avoid recognizing them as capitalist. Our observation that deformed workers' state theories really amount to third-system theories was corroborated once again.

Two years ago LRCI turned its line completely around. They rejected the term "moribund workers' state" and replaced it by "restorationist bourgeois state." Moreover, they characterized



Trotskyist "Bulletin of the Opposition," 1936. Headline reads, "The Moscow trial - a trial of October"; caption under photo of Lenin and Trotsky describes them as "the real accused." Moscow trials of late 1930's cemented Stalinist counterrevolution that overthrew Soviet workers' state.

their previous theory as "radically false and misleading," "undialectical," "confused" and "absurd." (*Capitalist Restoration and the State*, LRCI website, November 2000.)

LRCI's new theory means "that formerly Stalinist countries, in which the economy is still not operating on fully capitalist lines, are not necessarily workers' states of any type. The key determinant is not the prevailing property relations, but the class and economic system that the state power promotes and defends." In the USSR, for example, the change took place in 1991 when Yeltsin established his government. Not only did LRCI not foresee the end of a "workers' state" or take note of it when it happened; they did not notice its loss for nearly a decade. (The you-win-some-you-lose-some attitude towards what should mean the working class's highest achievement is typical of academic game-playing, not Marxist politics.) LRCI has a section in Ukraine, whose working-class members, if any there be, must have been disappointed to learn in 2000 that they were no longer part of the nominal ruling class, however moribund.

LRCI also had to retroactively re-think their assignment of the dates at which the East European states after World War II became "workers' states." Their previous line had defined the

turning point to be when the economies were totally statified (that is, in 1950-51). Now they say it was when “the governments and states began to move decisively against capital and capitalism and to create bureaucratically planned economies on the Stalin model, i.e. in 1948-49.”

This hardly solves the key problems, which we pointed to in *PR*'s 20 and 21. In neither 1948-49 nor 1950-51 did the state machinery change – there were no revolutions. The only relevant state-power change occurred earlier, when the Soviet Army conquered East Europe in 1944-45. But then the regimes installed were clearly capitalist popular fronts led by the Stalinists with openly bourgeois parties present. According to either Workers Power's new or old theory, these capitalist regimes would have been turning their own states from bourgeois to proletarian. That is, capitalist states would have carried out the socialist revolution. That burlesque of theory occurs because for all its recent self-criticism, LRCI has not dealt with the real contradiction in every version of their theory: “workers' states” without the working class.

BUREAUCRATIC COLLECTIVISTS

The theory of bureaucratic collectivism should have collapsed with Shachtman's open adaptation to imperialism; it survived in a leftist form in the U.S. among the Independent Socialists of the late 1960's through to the Solidarity group today. But it had no grasp whatever of the motion of the Stalinist system it pretended to describe. (See Robert Brenner quoted in the box on p.29.)

In Britain, the Workers' Liberty tendency led by Sean Matgamna has revived bureaucratic collectivism. In 1998 Matgamna edited a volume of writings by Shachtman and other bureaucratic collectivists, prefacing it with a 150-page introduction of his own. Matgamna's aim is to show that Trotsky misunderstood the Russian question while Shachtman & Co. were basically right.

Nevertheless, Matgamna can find nothing from his theoretical predecessors to account for Stalinism's collapse. Indeed, he is forced to conclude:

They got the overall perspective of Stalinism wrong. From our vantage point it is plain that Trotsky, and then Shachtman until 1946 or '47, were right to regard the Stalinist phenomenon as an aberration in the broad sweep of history. It is understandable that the spread of Stalinism after 1944 to a further sixth of the Earth should have led Shachtman to misunderstand. Nonetheless it is plain now that the Stalinist systems emerged as parallels to capitalism, not as its successor. They were historical blind alleys. (*The Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism*, Vol.1, pp.155-6.)

Matgamna agrees most fundamentally with Shachtman not in his specific analysis of Russia but in his favoring of the West in the Cold War:

In the post-war World where the USSR was the second great global power, recognition that the USA and Western Europe – advanced capitalism – was the more progressive of the contending camps, the one which gave richer possibilities, greater freedom, more for socialists to build on, was, I believe, a necessary part of the restoration of the Marxist balance to socialist politics. (p.145.)

Western capitalism, however, is imperialism. And in the world as a whole, the possibilities it gave to the masses of the ex-colonial world were hardly rich or free. Fifteen years ago, this magazine observed that Matgamna (evidently without knowing

it) was not only turning his then-theory of deformed workers' states towards bureaucratic collectivism; he was also adopting an extreme cynicism toward the revolutionary capacity of the working class and adapting heavily to pro-imperialist reformism. For example, he took a neutral position on Britain's imperialist war against Argentina over the Malvinas Islands in 1982. (See “Where Are the Matgamnaites Going?” in *PR* 28.) In his book Matgamna deplores Shachtman's most open capitulations to imperialism: support for the U.S.'s assaults on Cuba and its war on Vietnam. But his own adaptation points in the same direction.

Another American bureaucratic collectivist current writes in *New Politics* magazine, whose co-editor, Julius Jacobson, has attempted to account for the fall of Stalinism. He too had to face the standard dilemma: if the USSR was not capitalist before 1991, then how did the old ruling class turn into the new? Jacobson took his theory to its logical conclusion:

In the Russian Republic – as in most nations of the dismembered USSR – there is the anomaly, tragic and farcical, of leading elements of the former Communist ruling class, driven by personal and social instincts of survival, mauling each other as they scramble and strain to self-metamorphose into the executive committee and financial elite of an artificially created and militantly anti-Communist bourgeoisie. A unique kind of one-dimensional “class struggle” in which a ruling class is fiercely fighting to overthrow itself. (*New Politics*, Winter 1995.)

The absurdity of a ruling class overthrowing itself is dictated by the need to see one class replacing another while both consist substantially of the same people. The conception that this is a “class struggle” (even if in mock quotation marks) downplays the real class struggle going on between bosses and workers. But overlooking such minor facts is inevitable for any theory that does not base its class analysis on the relations of exploitation between rulers and producers.

The “Russian question” was never just a debate over the proper description of the Stalinist system. It is at the heart of how working-class revolutionaries understand the role of their own class in creating a new society that can put an end to the misery so many millions endure under capitalism. The Russian workers' revolution of 1917 was the outstanding achievement in our class's 150-year history. The downfall of Stalinism was a warped after-effect of that achievement, since the central reason for the collapse was the statified capitalist ruling class's desperate need to dismantle the workers' remaining gains.

Trotsky often said of the Soviet Union that those who could not defend the past gains of the working class could not possibly help achieve new ones. The same is true of those who cannot understand them.●

LRP/COFI Online

Our website features basic documents of the LRP-COFI in English, German, Russian and Spanish, as well as statements, leaflets and news items to help keep readers informed of our activities.

Visit our website at www.lrp-cofi.org

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and against dictatorial regimes. Revolutionaries will have to prove themselves the most reliable champions of these demands while making clear that only an independent working-class struggle, leading the other oppressed and exploited classes to the overthrow of capitalism through world socialist revolution, can solve these democratic problems.

This perspective guides our priorities in the work to recreate the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution. We are optimistic that our fraternal international organization, the Communist Organization for the Fourth International (COFI) will be strengthened in the near future through advancing common work with supporters in Germany, the ex-Stalinist countries, the Middle East and elsewhere. To this end we are planning an international conference to take place next year.

The collapse of Stalinism left a strong barrier to socialist revolution in tatters, and the deepening economic crisis has also greatly weakened Social Democratic reformism. But the forces of centrism, which vacillate between a subjective commitment to revolution and an objectively reformist role in the class struggle, remain. Our last perspectives document predicted that the centrists would seek to revive reformism through the creation of new “mass” parties. And so they have, with new reformist parties or electoral blocs launched in various countries, including Italy, Germany, Britain and Australia, where they promote class-collaborationist populism. The LRP and COFI will continue to stand against the creation of new reformist parties, which only represent new roadblocks to working-class struggle and building vanguard revolutionary parties.

U.S. Perspectives

The U.S. has so far been spared the worst effects of the international economic crisis. It has used its sole superpower status to exploit the rest of the world, particularly the “Third World” and thus boost sagging profits. Our national perspectives document takes this into account, connecting U.S. imperialism’s attacks abroad with the class struggle at home. While the ruling class’s post-September 11 patriotic hype continues to dominate popular consciousness, beneath the surface there is growing rage at corporate wealth and political corruption swelling while working-class living standards continue to be under attack. Particularly for Blacks, Latinos and immigrants, the “United We Stand” rhetoric is another lie in the face of deepening racist oppression.

We identify the rise of populism as the greatest threat to the development of working-class political consciousness. Even the most left-wing populism is opposed to the idea of independent working-class struggle against the capitalists. Inherently nationalist, it advocates a struggle by “the people” against greedy elites. But it can only aim to replace the current capitalist politicians with more left-sounding bureaucrats. Left populism’s effort to solve society’s problems within capitalism is doomed. Thus it sets the stage for the growth of right-wing populist ideologies, including fascism.

With its large middle class blurring the class line between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the U.S. has always been a breeding ground for populism. One recent sign was that many leftists raced to support Ralph Nader’s Green Party presidential campaign in 2000. Thus we must sharply draw the class line in every struggle we are involved in. Our perspectives look to huge, sudden changes, including a fierce battle for influence between revo-

lutionary communists and populists, the outcome of which will literally be a matter of life and death for the working class.

Building the LRP

Our U.S. Perspectives document identifies a small vanguard layer of revolutionary-minded young workers, mostly Black and Latino, already emerging amid current struggles. Beginning to win this vanguard layer will be decisive to building the party.

We are a fighting propaganda group. While we seek to participate in every major working class struggle, we confirmed our focus on work at industries and struggles where this vanguard layer is concentrated. We will seek to deepen work among New York’s transit and hospital workers. We will use our work in the Chicago Teachers Union to defend the interests of the largely Black and Latino students and involve them in struggle. We will also continue our work on working-class college campuses like City College in New York’s Harlem. And we will continue to pay great attention to struggles against police brutality. Since our last convention we have steadily recruited new members, particularly youth and created a modestly larger, more energized organization.

Two interrelated priorities will be the professionalization of our organizational functioning, and the training of a new generation of leaders in our organization. The LRP has always been a very serious group committed to meeting the rigorous challenges of the class struggle. But years of isolation and sluggish class struggle in this country have allowed our internal functioning to become sloppy. The political quality of our work has always been high, but we have been less dependable in maintaining a disciplined focus on priority work and completing tasks on time. Also, a number of younger comrades are already playing leading roles in our organization, and we have made a priority of having the more experienced members work with them to politically train still newer comrades as future leaders.

Through these combined efforts we hope to lay the organizational foundation for addressing our organization’s greatest problem: its press. For years *Proletarian Revolution* has played an outstanding role as a beacon of genuinely revolutionary Marxism in an international fog of political confusion. But *PR* is issued so infrequently that we often lack up-to-date propaganda to effectively participate in the class struggle and attract new recruits. It is clear to us that we need a more frequently, regularly produced and more popularly written publication to supplement *PR*’s crucial theoretical role. To this end, we adopted a plan of issuing regular *PR* supplements between major issues, to test whether our organizational improvements will make the launching of a new publication possible.

DEFENDING IRAQ FROM U.S. ATTACK

After the convention, with Washington preparing to go to war with Iraq, the LRP swung into action in unions, on campuses, and in anti-war protests across the country. We issued a bulletin entitled *No U.S. War Against Iraq!* which exposed the U.S.’s imperialist aims and called on American workers to oppose the slaughter and conquest that “our” ruling class is planning. The front-page article in this issue expands on these themes.

In the Unions

LRP supporters in a number of unions raised and backed motions against the planned war on Iraq.

In New York’s Transport Workers Union Local 100, an LRP supporter moved such a motion in the Track Division, which was passed overwhelmingly. Meanwhile the central leadership continues to stall discussing an anti-war motion raised by another Local

100 member on the Executive Board.

In Service Employees International Union Local 1199, LRP supporters backed a motion against the war raised at the September Delegate Assembly. The motion passed by an overwhelming vote and committed the union to mobilizing for anti-war protests. However, the Local's Executive Council bureaucratically adopted its own pro-imperialist "anti-war" statement and published a version of it widely as an open letter to President Bush and Congress from President Dennis Rivera and Secretary-Treasurer George Gresham.

"On behalf of the 220,000 members of 1199/SEIU," Rivera and Gresham's letter made clear that they agree with the policies of dominating Iraq that Washington is implementing, and only urged the Bush Administration to exercise restraint. In reference to the economic sanctions that have starved to death over half a million Iraqis, Rivera and Gresham wrote that "The policy of containment of the Saddam Hussein regime has worked well for a decade." Of the policy of singling out Iraq for disarmament (while supporting the U.S. and Israeli arsenals of nuclear and other "weapons of mass destruction,") they wrote that "Like you, we demand that Iraq give complete access and cooperation to UN inspection teams and immediately destroy any weapons of mass destruction that may exist on its territory." LRP supporters in Local 1199 immediately denounced this statement as pro-war and issued a leaflet, *1199 Leadership Betrays the Fight: Stop the U.S. War Against Iraq!*, which exposed the betrayal.

The 1199 leadership's pro-imperialist position only adds to the pro-boss line they have taken in recent contract struggles and in actively campaigning for the election of capitalist politicians like Republican Governor George Pataki. These are further reasons why class-conscious workers in 1199 must turn to building a new, revolutionary socialist alternative leadership in the union that can be relied on to lead the struggle against the hospital bosses and all the capitalists' attacks.

In the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) an LRP supporter raised a motion to oppose the looming war on Iraq. This and other work in the CTU is discussed in the article on page 20.

On Campuses

In New York City, LRPers at the City College of New York have joined with others in the CCNY Coalition Against the War to organize protests, speak-outs and meetings against the war.

In Chicago, since the school year started, the LRP has been working on the campus of Northeastern Illinois University, where we have emphasized our opposition to U.S. imperialism and the war against Iraq. Northeastern is a working-class, public university with a significant number of Middle Eastern students.

Anti-War Demonstrations

In cities across the country, LRPers have participated in a number of demonstrations against the planned war on Iraq, as well as in defense of Middle Eastern and Central Asian immigrants who have been jailed by the government (often without being charged with any crime) since the September 11 terrorist attacks.

We stand for the largest demonstrations possible, which need be united around no more than opposition to war against Iraq. However, in these largely middle-class protests, pacifist ideas often combine with pro-U.S. imperialist views that oppose the planned unilateral war in favor of appeals to the United Nations and its no less imperialist policies of economic blockade and weapons inspections. We make clear that it is the duty of every internationalist to not just oppose Washington's war but also defend Iraq from imperialist attack. Against those who seek to



downplay the struggle of the Palestinian masses against Zionist oppression, we prominently raise slogans including *All Israel Is Occupied Territory!* and *For Arab Workers' Revolutions to Overthrow Zionism and Imperialism!*

In New York City, as many as 15,000 people rallied in Central Park on October 6 against the war. While the protest was dominated by pacifist views, our revolutionary anti-imperialist perspective gained much interest and we sold hundreds of bulletins, pamphlets and copies of *Proletarian Revolution*.

An LRP supporter also attended a demonstration in Minneapolis on October 26, which attracted some 10,000 people. The protest took place the day after the death in a plane crash of Minnesota's liberal Democratic Senator, Paul Wellstone. Pro-imperialist Democratic Party sentiment so dominated the rally that we found only limited interest in our revolutionary views.

In Chicago, LRPers attended a number of protests and meetings opposing U.S. imperialism in the Middle East, but they have remained small so far. Particularly disappointing was the October 7 national demonstration in solidarity with the Palestinian people, organized by the Al Awda Right of Return Coalition. Earlier this year, pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Chicago had attracted over a thousand participants, largely from the city's Arab communities, and hopes were high for a similarly strong show of support for the Palestinian struggle. But this time only 500 people rallied. We distributed many copies of our leaflet against the war on Iraq, and our placards condemning Zionist/U.S. oppression and calling for Arab workers' revolutions were popular.

These efforts culminated in a large contingent of LRPers from both New York and Chicago, as well as friends of the organization, traveling to Washington on October 26 for the national anti-war demonstration which is described in our lead article.

NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT

A crucial focus for the LRP in New York City continues to be work in TWU Local 100. The Local is in the middle of negotiations with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) bosses over a contract which expires on December 15 and faces the very real possibility of a strike.

Readers of *PR* will recall the powerful pro-strike movement among Local 100 members during the 1999 contract struggle, in which the LRP, led by our supporter Eric Josephson, played a decisive role: our strike motion was unanimously approved by the thousands of workers present. (See *PR* 60 and 63.)

The strike movement was defeated by the combined efforts of then-mayor Giuliani and the Local leadership, and betrayed by the opposition New Directions (ND) caucus, which refused to act on the members' decision. But the workers' sense of power and militancy gained in the struggle continued. This led to the ouster of the old bureaucracy and the coming to power of ND, led by Roger Toussaint, who militant workers hoped would lead a tough fight against the bosses. It also led to Josephson's election to the



New York transit workers demonstrate for a new contract on October 30. LRP-distributed placards were snatched up and brandished throughout the action.

position of Vice-Chair of the Track Division.

Toussaint has swung sharply to the right since taking office. He has dissolved ND, witch-hunted union militants and sought to avoid militant struggle in favor of relying on Democratic Party politicians. Militant workers still hope that he will lead a real fight and deliver a good contract. Meanwhile, Toussaint's hopes of getting a contract he can sell to the ranks short of a strike are being dashed by a united front of management and politicians, who are using September 11, the city budget crisis and the looming Iraq war to force concessions and make an example out of transit workers.

In this situation, our regular bulletin, *Revolutionary Transit Worker (RTW)*, has promoted the idea of a strike, explaining how with the power to shut the city down and bring the capitalists to their knees, transit workers can win their contract demands and amnesty from Taylor Law penalties. Taking off from the Local's official slogan, "Second Class No More," we distributed hundreds of placards at Local 100 rallies with the slogan "First Class Contract or Strike." These have been wildly popular.

In response to this, Josephson has come under fierce attack from President Toussaint, who wrote him a slanderous and threatening personal letter accusing him and the LRP of trying to forge Local 100 placards and acting as "agent provocateurs." Josephson replied with an open letter exposing this lie and demanding that Toussaint apologize and respect the democratic rights of the members. (Write to us for copies of this letter and past issues of *RTW*.) Since then, Toussaint has apparently backed off.

Meanwhile, pressure for a strike continues to grow among transit workers. The LRP continues to warn transit workers that the Toussaint leadership cannot be relied on to lead the struggle to victory. With the mayor launching massive budget cuts and other anti-worker attacks and the governor preparing to do the same, we are emphasizing the role transit workers can play in not just striking to win a first-class contract but also sparking a mass working-class fightback against all the attacks.

FIGHTING COP BRUTALITY AND ANTI-GAY VIOLENCE

As we explain in our article on police brutality in this edition of *PR* (page 48), one result of the post-September 11 patriotic hype, hero-worship of the police and expansion of police powers has been a wave of racist cop terror. In New York, we joined a protest against the killing in April of Santiago "Chago" Villanueva.

LRPers also joined the annual October 22 national day of protests against police brutality in both New York and Chicago. In New York, about 300 people attended the march, much smaller than in past years and indicative of how far back the movement against police brutality has been set since September 11. But we distributed many copies of our bulletin against a war on Iraq and sold a number of copies of our pamphlets *Fight Police Terror and Armed Self-Defense and the Revolutionary Program*.

Chicago's demonstration was about half the size of New York's. Here we also participated in a demonstration on November 3 at the Cabrini Green projects, where about 150 people protested the cops' killing of an unarmed young Black man, Michael Walker.

Chicago LRPers also attended the annual Matthew Shepard memorial demonstration. Even though this year it was small and less militant than in the past, it is about the only lesbian/gay rights action in town, since the Stonewall commemorations long ago turned into apolitical parades in Chicago.

DEMONSTRATION FOR REPARATIONS

On August 17, LRPers attended the demonstration in Washington demanding reparations for slavery. We distributed a leaflet written for the event entitled *Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!*

No struggle is more justified than that of Black people for justice for the colonialist capture of Africa, centuries of chattel slavery, wage slavery, racism and imperialist exploitation. These horrors continue to be the foundation of capitalism in this country. But for the same reason, the demand that the American government pay reparations for these crimes is unreal and a diversion. Black people's liberation from this bloody legacy will take a socialist revolution that uproots the entire capitalist system.

Our leaflet argued for a strategy of mass struggle against the current attacks. It also addressed the source of this crisis of leadership – the growing class divide between the layer of bourgeois and middle-class Black people who, while still faced with racism, have "made it" in capitalist America, and the masses of working class and poor Blacks who suffer the most from racism and all the other ills of the system. The solution is the building of an interracial working class revolutionary socialist party to lead today's struggles. Because of their intense oppression, their experience of the struggle against it and their leading role in working class struggles in general, Blacks and all people of color will join and build this working class leadership out of proportion to their numbers in the working class as a whole.

While many Black people solidarize with the demand for reparations, they don't regard it as real. As a result, we were not surprised to find that the demonstration was small (only around 5000); far from being the beginning of a movement, it felt more like the end of one that never began. We were a little surprised, however, by the fact that most of those in attendance were working-class youth. Most were desperate for the opportunity to participate in any mass protest against racism and were not strongly attached to reparations, as we found through many conversations about the campaign.●

Police Terror

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- trumped up charges initially filed against the partygoers were dropped, no cop was ever punished for their brutality. Indeed their identities remain a secret closely guarded by the NYPD.
- In January, again in Brooklyn, 23-year-old Haitian immigrant Georgy Louisgene was shot to death by cops. Louisgene had called police after he had been attacked by unknown individuals and armed himself with a knife and a stick in self-defense. Police would later use those weapons as their excuse for shooting him, although witnesses declare that Louisgene never attacked them. Police intimidation forced a number of witnesses to flee in fear from the area of the murderous cops' 67th



Brooklyn, July 2002. Protest outside D.A.'s office includes family members of Georgy Louisgene, who was killed by police.

- Precinct. The official investigation whitewashed the affair and no charges were ever filed.
- Less than two months later in Brooklyn, Pakistani immigrant Raja Iqbal was walking to his job when he found the street he needed to walk down closed off by cops responding to a street fight. When he asked a cop if he could walk down the street the cop called him "Taliban," punched him in the face, arrested him, continued to beat him while he was cuffed, then had him locked up in the 70th Precinct station house – the same one where Abner Louima was tortured.
 - In April, Santiago "Chago" Villanueva, a Dominican community activist and musician from Washington Heights in New York, was killed by New Jersey police. When he suffered an epileptic seizure at work, cops came, harassed him and his co-workers, cuffed him and sat on him until he stopped breathing. The medical examiner pronounced Villanueva's death a homicide, but the cops who killed him are still on the beat.
 - Three days later, a cop in Long Island, New York, shot and killed José Colon during a supposed drug raid. No drugs nor weapons were found. The police claimed the cop's gun fired accidentally and praised the police involved for not killing others in the building!
 - Two days more passed before Ricardo Colon was shot three times and killed by a retired police officer in Staten Island. The ex-cop claimed the unarmed Colon was trying to rob him. No charges were pressed.
 - On May 2 Egbert Dewgard was a suspect in a drug investigation. Unarmed, he was shot in the back by a federal agent in

Brooklyn. No charges were pressed.

Outside of New York City, two cases of police brutality gained national attention within days of one another because they were both captured on videotape:

- On July 6, white cops in Inglewood, California, beat 16-year-old Black youth Donovan Jackson-Chavis during a traffic stop of his father's car. The video captured by a witness showed cops body-slaming the young man into the ground and then again into the hood of the squad car. Cops pressed charges of assault and resisting arrest against Chavis – until the videotape was released. Such beatings and frame-ups are, of course, commonplace. The only thing that made Chavis's beating special was the fact that it was caught on tape.
- Two days later, in Oklahoma City, cops responded to a call from a vigilante who specializes in videotaping people soliciting prostitutes and then alerting police. When the cops arrived they were so confident that the "videotape vigilante" would cover for them that, after they cuffed the accused John, Donald Reed Pete, they punched, kicked and beat him with their batons and even pepper-sprayed him in full view of the camera. But this was too much for the vigilante, who released the tape to the media and explained that Pete "never once made a fist." That didn't stop Police Captain Jessica Cummings from defending the officers, saying they followed proper use-of-force procedures.

Firestorms of community outrage have also flared over police shootings in Minneapolis, Seattle and Boston. But they have received little attention beyond local media coverage. And in each case, with the exception of those caught on videotape, prosecutors have quickly dismissed all charges against the cops.

NO TRUTH, NO JUSTICE: THE AMERICAN WAY

The pro-cop atmosphere fostered after September 11 gave the police a green light to beat, shoot and kill without fear of punishment or even much attention. The courts were an important factor in this. They work hand in glove with the cops in their day-to-day work, although mass struggles have sometimes succeeded in forcing them to press charges against the most outrageously brutal and murderous cops. After September 11, the courts went above and beyond their usual efforts to protect the police, not only refusing to even file charges in almost all of the cases of police brutality, but even going back in time to free cops previously charged with crimes. Two cases stand out in this.

Following the murder of unarmed Black youth Timothy Thomas in Cincinnati by a white cop in 2001, thousands of Black working class youth protested and then rioted against the police. (See *PR* 63.) The rebellion was crushed by the police, but mass protests forced the courts to press charges against the killer cop, officer Stephen Roach. (The federal Justice Department had already been compelled to step in to negotiate a toothless oversight of the Cincinnati police; see box on p. 47.) But immediately after September 11, the Cincinnati courts dropped even the meager misdemeanor charge that had been pressed against Roach. Then, in February, the courts began their efforts to free the cops accused of directly assisting and covering up the 1997 torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima in New York.

Officer Charles Schwarz had already been found guilty of holding Louima down in the bathroom of the 70th Precinct station house while officer Justin Volpe sodomized him with a stick. But an appeals court overturned this conviction on preposterous grounds. Since Schwarz's lawyer was contracted by the Patrolman's Benevolent Association (PBA) union, the courts argued that he had a conflict of interest, since he also had to protect

the PBA from possible charges and that could pressure him to allow Schwarz to take the full blame for the incident and thus spare the PBA from responsibility. But the courts had explicitly warned Schwarz of this conflict at the beginning of the trial and Schwarz rejected the warning, declaring that he understood it but still wished to use the PBA lawyer. The appeals court nevertheless ruled that Schwarz was “not a rational man” when he made this decision and threw out the assault conviction.

Having overturned Schwarz’s assault conviction on a flimsy technicality, the court then moved to overturn the perjury and obstruction of justice verdicts that had been found against Schwarz and two other cops, Thomas Wiese and Thomas Bruder, on even more ridiculous grounds. The court found that the three cops had lied and sought to cover up the crimes committed against Louima. But the judges said that the cops had sought to mislead state and federal investigators, not specifically the grand jury that later heard the case and which they were charged with misleading. So the court threw out all the charges against them!

If any court ever decided to free a convicted Black man on grounds like these, the media would be whipping up a racist frenzy of outrage. But when the beneficiaries were three white cops, the tabloids spared no effort in sensational headlines proclaiming their “innocence” after the appeals court supposedly cleared them. In the aftermath of September 11, brutal lying cops are hailed as heroes. For this ruling class, they are a moral inspiration and profile in courage.

Prosecutors didn’t even bother to press any further charges against Wiese and Bruder. And when Schwarz was retried in June, the predominantly white jury found him guilty on only one count of perjury and deadlocked on the other three counts, including assault. Another jury had been selected and a re-trial was about to begin, when the prosecutors and Schwarz’s defense struck an unprecedented deal.

All outstanding charges against Schwarz were dropped; in return he agreed to accept a five-year sentence for one perjury conviction. He had faced 15 years for his original convictions and could have gotten another 15 years if convicted on the other perjury and civil rights charges. Besides waving his right to appeal there was very little substance to Schwarz’s “concession”: since when does a convicted criminal have to “agree” to be punished?! Also, unlike a standard plea-bargain, Schwarz did not have to plead guilty or admit any wrongdoing!

What made the deal unprecedented was its explicit effort to end all inquiry into who was responsible for the torture of Abner Louima. The agreement included a gag order according to which the prosecution agreed with Schwarz, his wife and his lawyers to never publicly discuss what his role was or wasn’t in Louima’s torture. In return for this agreement, Schwarz’s sentence would be reduced by another 13 months! Clearly the prosecutors’ priority was not bringing Schwarz to justice but to suppress the entire embarrassing case. As chief prosecutor Alan Vinegrad put it: “The purpose of today’s resolution is to put an end to the continuing debate about whether or not Mr. Schwarz was in the bathroom.”

Even the racist New York *Daily News* felt compelled to comment skeptically on the gag order, in a news story entitled “It Ends With a Vow of Silence”:

[Judge] Raggi had some things to say about how seriously she took the perjury conviction in a case involving such an horrific assault in a police stationhouse. “A civilized society demands that those responsible be held accountable,” she said.

Only this was the very issue that would never be fully resolved. What actually transpired in the bathroom was no

longer at issue. What mattered was that neither side embarrass the other by talking about it in public, the defendant’s wife included.

The most heinous case of police brutality in city history was being settled like a messy divorce or a product liability case, with both parties pledging eternal silence. “Forever,” Vinegrad would later note.

The courts made clear their intention to protect the police department long ago by not prosecuting the entire 70th Precinct for attempted murder and conspiracy to obstruct justice since all were involved in allowing the torture of Louima to take place and covering it up. And few illusions should have remained in the courts willingness to prosecute racist cops after a weak prosecution not long ago allowed the cops who murdered Amadou Diallo to walk scot free. But the courts’ failure to bring to any sort of justice the cops most directly responsible for Louima’s torture was a new low, made possible by the pro-cop atmosphere generated after September 11.

THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE WALL OF SILENCE

Responsibility for these injustices and the new wave of cop terror goes beyond the ruling class and its forces of repression. White political, union and other figures have long remained silent on police brutality. Their record is so bad that no one would expect them to speak out on the issue. However, there are many Black and Latino community and political leaders who have been expected to raise their voices in protest.

But since September 11 they have, without exception, fallen in line with the pro-cop, patriotic shift in mainstream capitalist politics. It has long been known that brutal and racist cops were surrounded by a “blue wall of silence” – a police force dedicated to hiding the truth. Now even prominent “community leaders” have joined the government, the courts, the media and the entire political spectrum in rallying to the cops and the patriotic cause, forming a new “red, white and blue wall of silence.”

Black leaders from the Congressional Black Caucus and the NAACP to Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton protested more in one week over a couple of harmless jokes about Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King in the movie *Barbershop* than they have in a whole year about scores of police killings and beatings. Indeed tellingly, they failed to even mention another joke from the same movie which suggested that Rodney King deserved the beating he got from police that later fueled the Los Angeles riot.

AL SHARPTON’S SILENCE

As the most prominent political leader in the country, who has built his career on speaking out against police brutality, Sharpton’s role must be examined in particular. Since September 11, Sharpton has fallen almost totally silent on the issue. He did not speak out on the cop murder of Geogry Louisgene, despite pleas for him to do so. Nor has he addressed any of the other murders and beatings by police.

Sharpton did focus some attention on the injustice of the Schwarz verdict. But he did not call for, or organize, a single mass protest to pressure the court either before or after its decisions. In fact, the one “Action Rally” he did call after the appeals court decision in the Louima case had a clearly pro-cop message. In an article entitled “Sharpton and Community Rally Around Louima,” the newsletter of Sharpton’s National Action Network (NAN) described it this way:

First he [Sharpton] introduced the other speakers who included Eric Adams, the head of 100 Blacks in Law

Enforcement; Charles Billups, Chairperson of the Grand Council of Guardians; Anthony Miranda, Executive Chairman of the Latino Officers Association; and James Davis, Councilman from Brooklyn and a former police officer. “Let me say at the outset,” Rev. Sharpton began, “that we have every ‘minority’/majority police association in New York City here this morning.”

It is telling that Sharpton mentioned no one other than this gaggle of disgruntled cops, because besides them and a few NAN flunkies, no one else was invited. The “community” was nowhere to be seen except in the headline of NAN’s report.

Sharpton’s speech went on to make clear that while protesting the court’s decisions, his real concern was not to appear anti-cop:

The positions that we are taking are not anti-police; they are anti-police brutality. The media must stop promoting the notion that the Black community is against the police.

When the media paint Sharpton and the entire Black community as anti-cop, it is a racist lie. They’re trying to suggest that it is their attitude that provokes hostility from cops and accounts for what they see as “excesses” by the occasional “rogue cop.” It’s a racist example of blaming the victim.

The police regularly harass, beat and kill Black people for no reason other than the color of their skin. This has won the cops widespread hatred among Blacks and all people of color, even though many at the same time see no alternative to protect them from the threat of crime. Thus there is a lot of truth to the suggestion that the Black community is against the police. To one extent or another, many realize the truth that Sharpton and every other pro-capitalist political leader tries to hide – that racist brutality is not an exception to the police norm, that it is not accounted for by a “few rotten apples” who make the whole police force look bad. Rather, racism, harassment and even murder are part of the cops’ unofficial job description.

The police exist to “serve and protect” the ruling class from the working class “community,” and that means day-to-day brutality. As a result, any attempt to separate police brutality from the police and reform the force is doomed to fail.

Sharpton’s concern that he not be viewed as anti-cop not only expresses his desire to be an accepted figure in mainstream politics. He is dedicated to the capitalist system. His political perspective expresses the needs of the Black middle class who are threatened by racism and want to mobilize mass support to

protect their interests from racist attack and even expand their power, and yet do not want to encourage struggles that threaten the system. If Black workers were to go beyond their leaders’ reformist program and threaten the system, the middle classes would be left with no role to play as brokers between the masses and the ruling class. They are thus dedicated to maintaining the pillars of capitalist rule: the capitalist electoral process, and if at all possible, the Democratic Party, the courts and the cops.

SHARPTON’S RUN FOR THE MAINSTREAM

Mass struggles may yet force Sharpton to return to his old rhetoric of the past, the better to maintain his influence and the system he serves. But the post-September 11 patriotic frenzy took place as Sharpton was already distancing himself from his more radical protest-leading past.

By the time of September 11, Jesse Jackson continued to occupy his position as the country’s most prominent Black political leader only because of the lack of a prominent challenger. Jackson rose to the position through two popular though unsuccessful campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination. Despite his craven support for the Democrats, notably Bill Clinton, his total lack of influence over the party’s policies had already discredited him. The scandal that he had fathered a child with his mistress seemed like the final nail in his political coffin.

It was only a matter of time that Sharpton would announce his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination and thus signal his bid to replace Jackson as leader of Black America. And so he did. But to succeed Sharpton knows that he must win the support of the not insignificant Black capitalist and upper middle classes, who are hostile to the Black masses and their struggles. Thus Sharpton is looking to avoid not just protests against police brutality, but any connection with mass struggles and their radical potential. He wants to appear as a “responsible” mainstream political leader.

In May of this year Sharpton made some key appearances, speaking to the National Press Club and appearing on NBC’s *Meet the Press*. On both occasions Sharpton did not once mention the Louima case or any other instance of police brutality and signaled his shift from past left-wing rhetoric. In an exchange with *Meet the Press* host Tim Russert, Sharpton made this clear:

Russert: “The Democratic Party’s moved too much to the center. You want to push it – what? – back to the left?”

Fight Police Terror!

No Support to Capitalism’s Racist Anti-Worker Police!

- Why capitalism is driven to deepen exploitation and racist oppression.
- Why revolution is necessary to achieve a society free of exploitation and oppression.
- Why the chief barriers to effective struggle are the Democratic Party politicians and the union bureaucrats.
- Why a revolutionary party must be built by the workers and poor if we are to stop being sold out.

From the Struggle against Police Brutality to the Struggle against the System That Oppresses Us All

A Proletarian Revolution Pamphlet; \$1.00
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Rev. Sharpton: “No, you said center. I said right, nor did I say I’m trying to move it to the left. I would argue that I would try to move it toward the center. I think that’s where I am [and] many Americans are; and I would argue most Democrats are.”

“Left” here means more radical policies that respond to the masses’ needs and challenge the capitalists. Sharpton was pledging to not get into policies that would destabilize the system. Indeed Sharpton has long viewed his role as being to curtail the system’s most excessive oppression and exploitation in order to avoid sparking mass struggles that could go too far.

THE BANKRUPTCY OF REFORMISM

Sharpton provided a perfect example of this perspective in his testimony to a New York City Council hearing. As the NAN newsletter explained, in an article entitled “Reverend Sharpton Gives Testimony at Hearing on Louima Case and Police Brutality”:

Rev. Sharpton began his testimony by stating why he believes it’s crucial for the good and welfare of the City that the Council address the issue of police brutality. Referring to what happened after the acquittal of the officers in the Rodney King beating, he said, “The reason New York City didn’t face the violence that LA did is because there were responsible people here who gave the community an outlet for rage.”

But the L.A. rebellion was not just an outburst of mass violence. It was a massive uprising of the oppressed, which included protests and battles with the racist police. In the absence of leadership and organization that could direct the rebellion into a focused struggle against the ruling class, riotous looting and property destruction came to dominate it. The answer is not to repudiate such rebellions but to go beyond them by creating mass organizations of struggle and a political leadership that is prepared to take on the system. (See *PR* 41 for more on the L.A. rebellion.)

As Sharpton’s testimony explains, reformist leaders since then have been concerned to direct mass outrage against police brutality away from rebellions and toward reforms within the limits of the system. That has meant promoting the illusions that the courts would deal justice to the brutal cops and their victims, that the Democratic Party would deliver reforms. If the experience of the last fifty years was not enough, the last twelve months of court injustice and police brutality should prove that this strategy is utterly bankrupt.

REVOLUTIONARY PARTY LEADERSHIP

The reformist perspective of Sharpton and the whole layer of political figures who claim leadership of the masses through unions and community organizations is in crisis. These leaders support the capitalist system and enjoy a privileged position in it as brokers between the ruling class and the workers. But the capitalist system is lurching into deeper crisis. Far from granting new concessions to the masses to quell their struggles, the ruling class must look to intensify its exploitation to save its profit rates. As part of this, the racist divisions of the working class and the oppression of Blacks, Latinos and especially immigrants must be intensified. That means police brutality will worsen, as the cops play an ever more intimidating role. Increasingly, Sharpton and the other leaders will have nothing more to offer than the hollow rhetoric of Jesse Jackson: “Keep Hope Alive.”

Police brutality is an inescapable part of capitalism, a system based on exploitation and oppression. Mass struggles that

threaten the ruling class can force the cops to temporarily back off their reign of terror. They can even force concessions from the courts and the politicians. But such struggles need a leadership that is prepared to challenge the system because it is dedicated to its overthrow: a revolutionary socialist leadership.

The League for the Revolutionary Party is dedicated to building that leadership in the course of all struggles by workers and the oppressed. In the struggle against police brutality we seek to build protests and other outbreaks of struggle into mass struggles of the working class and oppressed. We seek to link the struggle against growing police brutality to the struggle against the capitalists’ economic attacks. We promote the idea of a general strike to unite the working class against these attacks and against the ruling class that fuels them. In the course of mass struggles, we also promote the organization of mass armed self-defense against cop terror. Through these struggles we seek to convince more and more workers that our class has the power not just to fend off the capitalists’ attacks but to make a revolution that overthrows their system and builds a classless world of freedom and plenty: a socialist world.

Beneath the temporary triumph of the ruling class’s “United We Stand” propaganda, there is a growing sense of anger among the working class and oppressed, and distrust in all their established leaders. Mass struggles against police brutality are on the horizon, as are explosions of working-class struggle against the intensifying capitalist attacks. But without a political leadership prepared to challenge capitalism and present an alternative to its exploitation and oppression, there is no one to give voice to this sentiment.

Sooner or later this sentiment will explode. When it does, it will leave the Sharptons of the world in a precarious position. But even when their containment efforts fail, which they inevitably will, that in itself will not be enough for the mass struggles to succeed. Leadership is necessary to give political direction. But it must be a leadership that is built by and composed of the most politically advanced workers and oppressed themselves; that has lived and breathed and grown out of their struggles, both mass struggles and the everyday struggles of life; that has learned the revolutionary lessons of those struggles and is dedicated to teaching those lessons to its class brothers and sisters in the struggles to come. In other words, what is needed is a revolutionary party of the vanguard of the working class. As the great Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky wrote in his *History of the Russian Revolution*:

Without a guiding organization the energy of the mass would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston, or the box, but the steam.

A piston box converts energy into a motor force that can power an engine. The revolutionary party creates the creative energy of the masses into a conscious force that can power a revolution. Just as one cannot wait to build the piston box until the water is already boiling over into steam, so we cannot wait to build the revolutionary party. If our class is to succeed in the coming battles, that must be our most urgent task.●

Letters Welcome

We invite readers of *Proletarian Revolution* to send letters to the magazine. Names will be withheld on request. Write us at P.O. 769, New York, NY 10033, USA.

Betrayal Hailed as Triumph in Cincinnati

Readers of *Proletarian Revolution* will recall our coverage of the massive rebellion against police terror by thousands of working-class Black youth in Cincinnati in April 2001. (See *PR* 63.) The rebellion was sparked when unarmed 19-year-old Black man Timothy Thomas was gunned down by a white cop.

Thomas was the fifteenth Black man killed by cops in six years by Cincinnati's exceptionally racist police department, and the fourth in less than six months. After each previous atrocity, the politicians and media would join to excuse the killing as justified while the establishment Black community leaders, led by Rev. Damon Lynch III, would appeal for calm and advocate hopeless reforms. Soon the city would return to normal.

The rebellion was an explicit rejection of these leaders' calls for peace. It was marked by many radical political actions that took aim at the city's seats of power, including the occupation of the City Council chambers and battles at police headquarters. It was an appeal for a new strategy and leadership for fighting not just police brutality but all forms of oppression and exploitation. But in the absence of a revolutionary leadership and strategy that could take the rebellion forward, it degenerated into rioting and was eventually crushed by the police.

LEADERS PROMOTE SELLOUT "REFORMS"

On the grave of the rebellion they had tried to prevent, Cincinnati's establishment Black leadership promised to force major reforms on the police department that would regain the masses' trust in peaceful solutions. They launched a lawsuit that sought to make the federal Justice Department bring action against the Cincinnati police for a "pattern or practice" of racial discrimination, and enforce a close monitoring of its policing.

As we discuss in detail in our pamphlet *Fight Police Terror!* even when such court cases have successfully won federal monitoring of police forces, they have done nothing to reduce police racism and brutality. But the establishment leadership in Cincinnati didn't even go this far. Instead of pursuing their court case, they agreed with the Justice Department to pursue mediation with the City Council, the mayor – and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). So instead of even bothering to appear to legally fight the police and government, the leaders agreed, in a "can't we all just get along" spirit, to work out a deal that everybody would be happy with.

Predictably, when an agreement addressing "community/police relations" was reached, it was a cruel betrayal of the struggle. The infamously racist attorney general John Ashcroft traveled from Washington to Cincinnati to announce the deal. It offered some window dressing, in which the police department agreed to change its use-of-force rules and implement a computerized system to track the behavior of individual officers. The two citizen bodies that had earlier been established to oversee the police – the Citizens Police Review Panel (created in 1998) and the Office of Municipal Investigation (created in 1981) – would be replaced by a new Citizen Complaint Authority, without giving the community any reason to think this would be any more effective in preventing further cop atrocities.

And while the rebellion aimed in part at driving the police out of Black neighborhoods, the agreement called for the city to "have police walk more foot patrols, attend community meetings and work with residents to develop strategies for fighting crime."

The FOP put the settlement in perspective on the day it was signed, as the *Cincinnati Post* reported:

Police union leaders insisted that the FOP's approval doesn't mean it admits any wrongdoing or that its officers have engaged in racial profiling. Also, the agreement focuses on improving police-community relations and doesn't involve racial profiling, they added.

That's about what you can expect when you invite the police to police the police.

LEADERS HAIL BETRAYAL AS TRIUMPH

This didn't stop Rev. Lynch from hailing the agreement: "We think we have an agreement that will be a landmark for this city. For this nation." But when he had to face anti-police brutality protesters at an April 7 march to mark the one-year anniversary of the murder of Timothy Thomas, Lynch struck a somewhat more radical pose. He gave credit to the rebellion a year earlier, saying that "The reason the Justice Department came into Cincinnati was because of the 9th to the 11th."

But Lynch could not point to any real change that would result from his deal. On the contrary, he had to admit that the agreement did nothing for the more than 800 Black people who were arrested by the police during the crackdown on the rebellion. "We cannot turn our back on the brothers and sisters who hit the streets April 9-11." But in reality, the rebellion had served Lynch's and the other community leaders' aim of elevating them as brokers with the ruling class, and they now offered the masses nothing more than a few words of concern.

Even worse, other Black political misleaders are now trying to hold up the Cincinnati settlement as a model to be extended to other major cities where the police are terrorizing people of color. Al Sharpton's National Action Network (NAN) held a meeting in Detroit on August 30, where Rev. Lynch came to tout the Cincinnati settlement, joined and supported by Michigan NAN President Rev. Horace Sheffield III and Ron Scott of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality.

The NAN press release promoting the press conference and forum in Detroit suggests that "the same type of action that was taken in Cincinnati should be taken in Detroit." Of course, they don't bother to mention any specific accomplishments achieved in Cincinnati – there were none – nor the fact that it was approved by the racist FOP.

Rather than exporting to the rest of the country the shameless betrayal in Cincinnati, we need to export the inspiring example of the 2001 rebellion. In particular, we need to spread the rebellion's main lesson: that revolutionary party leadership must be built by the most politically advanced workers and youth to oppose the betrayals of the reformist leaders and mobilize the masses. We need a struggle that can challenge the capitalist system that breeds racism and police brutality. ●

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Fall 2002

Police Terror Since September 11:

The Red, White and Blue Wall of Silence

by Jeff Covington

At the time of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the lines of class exploitation and racial oppression that cut through American society were becoming more recognized. The working class and poor were seeing the end of an economic "boom" that left them working longer and harder for less, while big businessmen got fatter than ever. Politicians were increasingly viewed as corrupt liars who smile into cameras while selling policies to corporate lobbyists in back rooms.

The state too was increasingly distrusted. Scandals of police brutality and racial profiling and massive protests against them by Blacks, Latinos and immigrants had won a broad recognition that the police could be systematically racist and terribly brutal. This outrage forced politicians to line up to condemn racial profiling as a very bad thing.

The September 11 terrorist attacks gave Washington and its media whores an unprecedented opportunity to begin to reverse this development of popular consciousness by rallying the masses to the nationalist cause. But it is an iron law of history that national unity only unites the exploited and oppressed behind their rulers, strengthening the latter's powers of oppression. And so it has been since September 11.

The patriotic fervor allowed the Bush Administration to survive a series of outrageous financial scandals that would have shaken, if not toppled, it at any other time. It has enabled it to massively escalate its imperialist military aggression, promising to follow its war on Afghanistan with a war against Iraq. And the ruling class went to great efforts to use the September 11 terrorist attacks to rehabilitate the image of the nation's police forces and greatly expand their repressive powers.

Along with masses of white workers, many Blacks and Latinos, the most exploited and oppressed in this society, responded to the patriotic call. Perhaps, many thought, September 11 would mark the beginning of a time when all Americans would stand together in unity and equality. As the politicians passed new laws like the "USA Patriot Act" that greatly expanded police powers to spy, arrest and interrogate suspects, they suggested that these laws were not aimed at Americans but rather at foreign enemies. Having been treated as dirty words not long before, "racial profiling" suddenly gained mainstream acceptance as thousands of Middle Eastern and Central Asian immigrants were rounded up and jailed without ever being even charged with crimes.

But the capitalist class rules America by dividing the working class with racism, oppressing and super-exploiting Blacks, Latinos and immigrants. The make-over of New York City's arch-racist Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his appointment by the

media as "America's Mayor" was a sign of things to come. The glorification of cops as heroes, the massive expansion of their powers and the rehabilitation of racial profiling could only mean a deadly threat to all people of color, and a dangerous forewarning to all workers.

POLICE TERROR SINCE 9/11

From the barrels of their guns and the ends of their night-



Los Angeles, July 2002. Hundreds of marchers protest police beating of teenager Donovan Jackson. Placard reading "A few bad apples? I don't think so!" nails the cops' role.

sticks, on the streets and in the dark cells of police precincts, police across the country have been delivering a bloody lesson in their true nature. The cases of police brutality and murder are too numerous to list in their entirety, and of course many horrendous incidents are never reported. But a list of some of the more prominent cases from New York City provides an indication of the wave of cop terror that has stretched across the country since September 11.

- Less than a month after September 11, Trinidadian immigrants Rayanne and Devon Thompson were celebrating a birthday party at a club in Brooklyn, when cops burst in and began severely beating partygoers, including the Thompsons and building owner Edwin Dick. The cops smashed up the basement and stole music and drinks for good measure. While the

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