



Re-Create  
the Fourth International

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## Revolution Sweeps East Europe



The era of Stalinist power in East Europe is ending. A revolutionary wave, as widespread as the historic international upheavals of 1848 and 1917-19, has toppled a succession of hated rulers and challenged the existence of the pseudo-socialist state system. And despite all the gloating about the triumph of Western values, the post-World War

II imperialist structure has been shaken as never before.

The most symbolic of many momentous events was the crumbling of the Berlin Wall on November 9. The rulers of the DDR (East Germany) opened the Wall in a desperate and futile attempt to halt the outflow of thousands of refugees. Meanwhile massive street demonstrations against repression and corruption in Berlin and Leipzig compelled party chiefs and state officials to resign in disgrace. Now bureaucrats and Western officials alike are hustling to shore up the disintegrating state power.

In Czechoslovakia, the East German events stimulated protests by students and intellectual dissidents. These first forced out Communist Party leader Milos Jakes and culminated in an immense general strike by the working class on November 27 that brought down the entire cabinet. Today

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# The Rape of Panama

As a result of the U.S. invasion, over 2000 Panamanians have been killed, thousands wounded and tens of thousands made homeless. In Panama, a small Central American country of 2.3 million people, the slaughter per capita was far greater than in the recent bloodbath in Romania.

"I've been frustrated that he's been in power so long, extraordinarily frustrated," George Bush whined in mid-December, referring to Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega. To assuage his ruffled feelings, Bush turned the firepower of 27,000 U.S. soldiers on the people of Panama. Tanks rolled through the streets shooting at anything that moved, while planes and helicopter gunships bombed and strafed working-class neighborhoods.

The numbers of dead and maimed are based on information released by Panamanian trade unionists and others. It is impossible to give exact figures; we can say with complete confidence, however, that official U.S. reports of only a few hundred dead are absurd lies. Even the U.S. military admits it made no attempt to identify or count the dead on the streets before hauling them off. Truckloads of bodies were dumped into mass graves like so much garbage.

The liberal Democratic politicians used to depict the president as a wimp. A popular cartoonist always portrayed him as invisible. Bush had indeed perfected the art of opportunism in his long climb upward in Washington politics. CIA chieftain, Republican party chairman, ambassador to China, vice president, slavishly echoing the likes of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, he would do or say anything to be popular with his political masters. But now, to virtually all the Democrats as well as the Republicans, Bush is not only highly visible but the champion of democracy in Panama. The media proclaim him as the man who showed the world who is boss.

It is the Panamanian working class which has become invisible. For example, the *New York Times* (December 31) said, "Panamanians of all classes seem for the moment not



to be disturbed by the prospect of a long-term American presence." It cites "the rich, for example" and "the middle class" — and no one else. TV news is crowded with coverage of joyous pro-American rallies and ecstatic citizens kissing U.S. troops. The *Times* quotes a Panamanian woman fawning over an American soldier, saying "We belong to you, and we need you take care of us." These happy people are almost always white and well-dressed; the angry and the victims are the darker masses, poorly clad, some buried in unmarked graves, all buried in the media.

But the working class *is* there, waiting, searching for a way to fight back. And not only in Panama. It was no accident that the usually lickspittle Organization of American States voted 20 to 1 (guess who) to "deeply regret" the invasion and call for troops to be removed. Who do you think this collection of bourgeois statesmen (i.e., comprador thieves) was afraid of?

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# Dinkins Fronts for Wall Street

Black candidates won important elections in Virginia and New York City in 1989. But even though the Democrats won, party politicians are rancorously debating the meaning of the victories. For the working class, their significance is deeper than what appears on the surface.

The debate indicates that the ruling class is upping the ante. Its attack on working-class living standards will intensify. For workers in general and blacks in particular, the threat of slashed wages and unemployment is severe.

At first it would seem that the success of Douglas

ance is significant since Robb is attempting to assume political leadership of the national party by attacking Jackson and claiming the political "center." In Wilder, Robb now has a successful black politician who can serve as a point man and cover for racist appeals to white voters. "Center" and "mainstream" are code words for keeping down blacks and other outsiders and "fringe elements" in society.

Further, Robb's program, like that of the party apparatus itself, aims at beating the Republicans by vying with them for the banner of "fiscal conservatism" — meaning

*Democratic Party is cemetery for workers' hopes and black movement. Jesse Jackson and David Dinkins are gravediggers who dig their roles.*



Wilder and David Dinkins, the new governor of Virginia and mayor of New York City, would mean a boost to the prestige of the nation's leading black politician, Jesse Jackson. However, their campaigns had veered to the right, away from Jackson's populist approach. Their victories are being used as evidence that the Democrats must move away from Jackson and toward the political center.

Pointing out that Wilder kept Jackson away from Virginia while Dinkins downplayed Jackson's support, some bourgeois spokesmen have even claimed that the votes were a blow against Jackson. Clearly upset, Jackson was put in the embarrassing position of having to claim credit for the Wilder and Dinkins victories.

But more than Jackson's ego is at issue. A concerted effort is being made by party regulars to undermine his role in the party. Those favoring the shift to the right hope to use gains made by black politicians, gains which he helped make possible, to cover for racist attacks on Jackson.

Wilder went along, criticizing Jackson for claiming any share of credit for his victory. Jackson had given his campaign no help "directly — or indirectly — that I know of." The point was not personal: Wilder called on the party to "take a plunge into the waters of America's new mainstream." Democrats, he said, should "focus on the values of the overwhelming majority of the people in this country."

These words could have been spoken by any number of white officials urging the party to the right. Indeed, Wilder's close ally and patron is Senator Charles S. Robb. This alli-

unraveling of government welfare programs ("entitlements" that benefit all layers, not just the poor) won by past labor action and black struggles. As well, it signifies a new step in government support for business attacks on workers.

## DINKINS DUNKS JACKSON

Whereas Wilder has openly distanced himself from Jackson, Dinkins had to fudge. It is worth putting the Dinkins campaign under a microscope because the extreme nature of this fudge helps clarify what is happening. We can begin with Jackson's victory in New York City during the 1988 Democratic presidential primary, which paved the way for Dinkins to run for mayor. Jackson dealt a blow to racist Mayor Ed Koch who sought to mobilize Jewish voters against the black candidate.

Dinkins was Jackson's New York campaign manager and in effect took over the local coalition behind Jackson. This included not only broad-based black support but also activist-oriented unions like Local 1199, the hospital workers' union headed by Dennis Rivera and the local unions of the Communication Workers led by Jan Pierce. Stanley Hill, chief honcho of DC 37 (AFSCME), which represents most city workers, also fervently enlisted in Dinkins' cause. They all played major roles in the campaign.

Dinkins' problem was to capitalize on Jackson's popularity so as to mobilize activists to defeat Koch — while at the same time maintaining enough distance so as not to antagonize Jewish voters hostile to Jackson. In this bal-

ancing act, as the campaign progressed Jackson was kept at arm's length. This became even more true after Dinkins won the Democratic primary.

In his race against Republican Rudolph Giuliani, Dinkins focused on Jewish voters, most of whom had voted for Koch in the primary. Dinkins' major campaign ads attacked Louis Farrakhan, the Black Muslim leader. When Giuliani ran ads addressed to Jewish audiences linking Dinkins to Jackson, Dinkins' staff went to great lengths to reassure voters that the two were quite different. While Giuliani was clearly appealing to racism, Dinkins' aides made a point of not defending Jackson but instead arguing against "guilt by association."



Although some black and left supporters of Dinkins voiced occasional complaints, their criticism was muted by the opportunist desire to win at all costs. Pragmatists accepted that Dinkins had to forego Jackson-style rhetoric to win white, particularly Jewish, votes.

Now supporters of Jackson and Dinkins see "experts" suggesting that Jackson has become a stumbling block for black politicians. Efforts to discard him as a sort of worn-out shoe have a certain poetic justice. After all, Jackson himself has been a champion of the same pragmatic approach now being turned against him. It was he who showed how to play the political game and cut deals in 1984 and 1988. If the fruit he now harvests tastes like sour grapes, he cannot object on principle.

#### THE REAL ISSUE: AUSTERITY

The discussion over who gets credit for the Wilder and Dinkins victories points to the real significance of what is taking place. Both Wilder and Dinkins are well suited to lead austerity attacks on minorities and the whole working class — especially Dinkins, who has ties to left-talking labor bureaucrats like Rivera and Pierce. The bourgeoisie expects Dinkins to use this good will to push through cutbacks and taxes that would have led to an uproar under Koch.

Indeed, the media have suddenly noticed that Dinkins' program is very similar to Koch's. He appointed Norman Steisel, an investment banker colleague of Felix Rohatyn, the bourgeois theorist of austerity, to be his first deputy mayor. Other Koch holdovers and Rohatyn fans are in charge of city finances.

In his first major post-election address, Dinkins promised city business leaders not to alter the pro-business policies of the Koch administration. Declaring that "government simply cannot afford to do all that needs to be done," he called on the City Council to push through \$200 million in service cuts proposed by Koch.

Letting slip the real policy of his incoming administration, Dinkins harkened back to the city crisis in the mid-1970s. Recalling this model of public and private sector cooperation, Dinkins stated that "we must come together as we did 15 years ago with the same spirit of urgency and resolve." What he fails to mention is that this "unity" came at the expense of the working class, which suffered tens of thousands of layoffs and massive cuts in wages and services.

Dinkins' speech got rave reviews from the bourgeoisie. *Newsday* found it "reassuring" and congratulated Dinkins on "his transition from candidate to leader by talking about his approach to maintaining fiscal stability." A major New York real estate developer approvingly commented that "when the candidate becomes the mayor, reality sets in." Even Koch was elated by Dinkins' performance. "Doesn't it sound like me?" asked the mayor. "I think so. I wonder if the same people will attack him that attacked me?"

Good question. In his first days in office he has followed through on his threatened cutbacks. Dinkins is counting on labor leaders and other supporters not to attack his program. But the union bureaucrats are under pressure from workers whose conditions are worsening and who are under the illusion that Dinkins owes them something in return for their backing.

Already one union leader and a major Dinkins supporter, Barry Feinstein of Teamsters Local 237, has been forced to distance himself from the new mayor. After Dinkins' gloom-and-doom austerity speech, Feinstein suddenly discovered that Dinkins represents management. Calling Dinkins "my boss" and "the enemy," Feinstein challenged the new mayor by announcing he was going to seek wage increases equal to those won by the hospital workers.

Reality has also hit some leftists in the face. The leftist *Guardian* newspaper, which after the primary had rhapsodized that "New York City suddenly feels like a better place to live," now fears that Dinkins has been pressured to "buy into the language of domination" and imagines there was a "coup" against the "people's candidate" between election and inauguration. This is pathetic. Dinkins' friends and program were the same in the fall as in the winter — for those not blinded by opportunist electoralism. Anyone who believes Dinkins' current line was unforeseeable should check out our previous issue.

A writer in the *Village Voice* urged the new mayor to

"keep himself available to his real friends and to those thousands of New Yorkers who believe in him as a force for revolutionary change." This slop comes after complaining, accurately, that Dinkins' campaign was run by "Manhattan elitists" beholden to Rohatyn, "whose only role in life is to make sure Wall Street welfare checks — interest on city bonds — get mailed every week." People who talk of revolution owe a little something to their readers: stop slobbering over politicians whose role in life is to kick the working class in the face.

#### MODERATION: STRENGTH OR WEAKNESS?

While Feinstein's remarks do not reflect a real break with Dinkins, they do point to a dilemma facing the administration. While Dinkins ran a moderate campaign which hardly addressed the needs of the masses, the campaign nevertheless aroused expectations by its very nature. Not only is Dinkins New York's first black mayor, but he defeated a mayor despised by many workers for his racist and anti-worker policies.

Thus, while Dinkins' role is to dampen the class struggle, the bourgeoisie is concerned that the masses may act on their illusions in him. This explains why an astute labor leader like Feinstein must distinguish himself from the mayor in order not to get caught in the middle of a working-class explosion against austerity.

In a workers' upsurge, Dinkins' "strength" — the moderate, middle-of-the-road pragmatic politics that helped him get elected — will suddenly become a weakness. Unlike Jackson, Dinkins is not attuned to the sentiments and rumblings of the masses. Jackson has demonstrated an ability to tap into explosive sentiments building within the working class as few bourgeois politicians can. This allows him to place himself at the head of emerging struggles, such as the hospital and telephone workers' strikes in New York, in order to derail them into safe channels. Dinkins, like Wilder, has never been a leader or a major activist in mass struggles. He has instead worked his way up through the party establishment (albeit one which placed huge obstacles in the path of black leaders).

Elections reflect deeper processes, as the bourgeoisie decides how to move and with what class alliances. Given the enormous weight of blacks in heavy industry and the cities, it is natural for the capitalists to use black politicians as pointmen in their attacks on the workers. Not only do they serve as Judas goats leading black workers to the economic chopping block; they also make perfect scapegoats. When the inevitable angry reaction comes in response to the austerity drive, white workers can then be demagogically told that blacks are to blame.

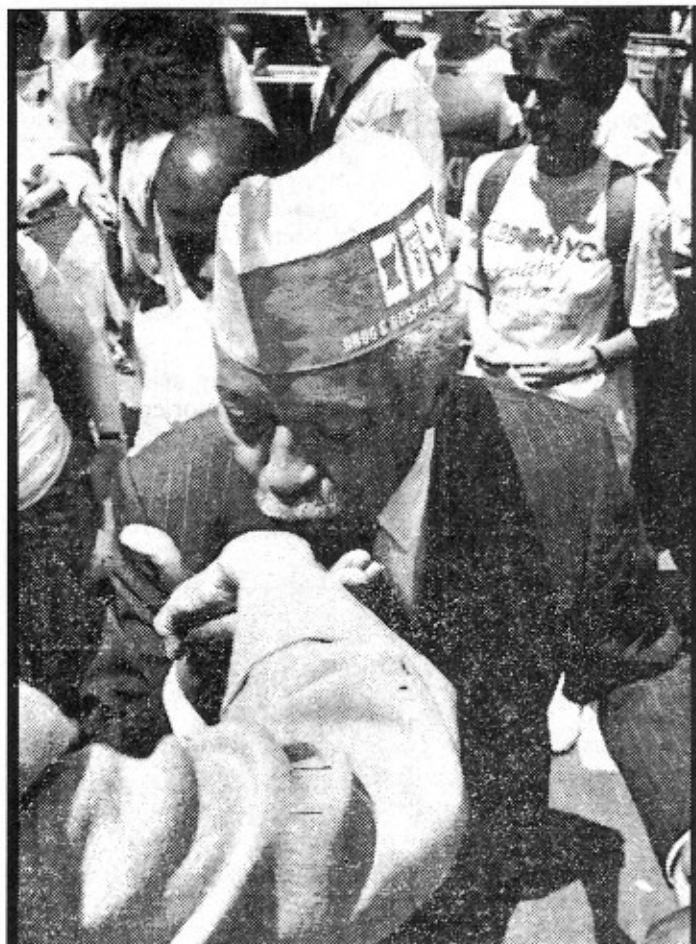
The ruling class far prefers social order to social upheaval; it is a frightened class which normally moves with great caution. While workers believe themselves to be weak, the capitalists well know what power labor could unleash if it had different union and political leaderships.

Jesse Jackson is absolutely loyal to capitalism, but the promises he makes to incorporate the masses seem to Wall Street to be part of the problem, not the solution. The Wilders and Dinkinses seem like a much safer bet. Their whole careers testify to their willingness to use their color to do capitalism's bidding, whereas a Jackson might have to deliver on some of his "wild" promises to hold his base.

Attempts to write Jackson's political obituary are premature. The capitalist crisis is deepening. While the bourgeoisie on the surface is elated by the events in East Europe, underneath they are frightened by the rise of

revolutionary movements anywhere, even in the Stalinist states. Slowly, the U.S. working class is beginning to shake off the effects of defeat and demoralization. A major class confrontation is unavoidable. In such a situation, the Wilders and Dinkinses and the bosses they work for will once again need the help of the Jacksons to contain the masses.

The working class cannot stop the coming accelerated wage cuts and unemployment by electoral means. It cannot stop crippling racist attacks through passivity. Only a year ago in New York, working-class students at the city col-



*David Dinkins at hospital workers' rally. As mayoral candidate, he exploited labor support. As mayor he'll help bosses exploit labor.*

leges, mostly minority, gave the politicians just an inkling of what could be done to hurl back their attacks by mass action. United action — a general strike against the capitalist assault — is the operative necessity. Given their history and position, there is no doubt that black workers will play an enormous role within the leadership of such a strike.

The coming period is filled with opportunities and dangers for the working class. In the absence of a revolutionary party, the future workers' explosion is ripe for derailment by political opportunists like Jackson. It is the task of revolutionaries to expose the class nature of Jackson and his allies in order to prevent them from misleading the working class into a class collaborationist course. The more successful they are in preventing the development of a revolutionary alternative, genuinely independent of the capitalists and their parties, the more they open the way for a solution from the right.■

# Panama

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The reasons for the U.S. invasion have nothing to do with Bush's feeble explanations: the threat to U.S. citizens and the Panama Canal, and the drug dealing of Noriega. Murder and harassment of its citizens in El Salvador and Nicaragua by pro-U.S. forces are ignored by Washington. The canal was already "defended" by thousands of U.S. troops whose real role is to keep Panama a semi-colony.

As for stopping Noriega's drug deals, that is the biggest fraud of all. He was started in the business by the CIA, itself notorious for drug running in Latin America and Asia. Noriega was a hired thug and agent, armed and encouraged by the U.S., notably by one George Bush, CIA godfather and "drug czar." Noriega's real crime was looking to feather his own nest first, after he had been bought and paid for. Only when this petty comprador criminal tried to cross his imperialist masters did they decide he was naughty.

## WASHINGTON CREATED NORIEGA

The claim that the U.S. was defending democracy is a real stomach-turner. Washington created Noriega's military dictatorship; now it has also created the Endara regime to replace it. Presumably Bush will allow Endara to put his own pants on, but little more. The "new" Panamanian army is led by former Noriega officers who have agreed not to bite the hand that feeds them.

Washington has many enemies. The USSR was one; increasingly, world imperialist conflicts will revolve around the U.S./German/Japanese rivalries. But underneath, the real enemy to U.S.-dictated stability is the struggle of the working classes of the world, seeking the way to overcome exploitation. The U.S. answer is a facade of incorporative "democracy" covering the mailed fist. The path of recovery from Vietnam has led to attacks on Lebanon, Grenada, Libya and military support to reaction everywhere, today most notably in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

The Soviet Stalinist rulers were always willing to betray the "third world" for a price. But at Malta Bush got a free ticket from Gorbachev and immediately clobbered Panama. Delicate radio receivers placed within two feet of the Kremlin heard Moscow's protest. However, the Salvadoran guerrillas, the Nicaraguan Sandinistas and above all the rebellious masses around the world had no trouble hearing Washington's message. In the reorganized world imperialist order, U.S. striking forces will be even more available for repression than in the past.

## U.S. WORKERS WILL LEARN

Bush's personal pique was of course a factor. As well, Panama offsets the adverse publicity he received for his too hasty embrace of Deng in Beijing. After all, Deng, Pol Pot, de Klerk, Cristiani et al are all fellow soldiers in the army of democracy and must be protected from sniping, so that the "war against drugs and terrorism" can proceed. In other words, U.S. foreign policy, underlined by Panama, says to the world's masses that as the mortal crisis of capitalism deepens, any and all means to compel greater exploitation will be used. There will be less tolerance for those who do not comply with imperialist demands.

There has been comparatively little protest in the U.S., unfortunately. Leftists and ant-war militants in the hundreds

have demonstrated in various cities. But there is no denying that for the moment the invasion is popular among U.S. workers. Many, genuinely fearing the drug plague in their communities, are being taken in. As well, workers are frustrated over the battering they have been receiving for years. Under the leadership of a craven labor bureaucracy,



Pushers pulled apart: General Noriega autographing 1984 photo for 'amigo' Bud Mullen, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration chief.

obedience to bourgeois legality has largely stymied militancy. Tragically, their anger is momentarily diverted: "at least, 'we' are not letting this bastard Noriega kick 'us' around any more."

## U.S. TROOPS OUT OF PANAMA!

However, given the circumstances in the U.S., class struggle is not only inevitable but explosive. Marxism shows us that even reactionary events teach lessons. The trampling of U.S. and international law by Bush & Co. in the invasion of Panama is as evident to its supporters as it is to its opponents. And when our class rises up, we pledge to Mr. Bush and all his friends that it will give bourgeois law the same respect that they do. Count on it!

We in the LRP/U.S. join fellow workers around the world in demanding the immediate withdrawal of *all* U.S. troops from Panama. ■

# Salvador Rebels Expose 'Democracy'

The road to "democracy" throughout the world would be a lot smoother if it weren't for the human factor. George Bush, who likes to be known as the "education president," sought to teach this lesson during the bloody civil war that raged in El Salvador's cities and towns in November.

The FMLN guerrillas launched a counterattack against the growing terror of the Salvadoran military and semi-

from the East, no quarter from the West.

In El Salvador in particular, the imperialists and their compradors aim to take back what little gains the masses have achieved: unions and peasant associations, limited parliamentary rights. Now that the battle is over the army is turning on the populace with even greater vengeance. And the Salvadoran bourgeoisie has turned to the most virulent form of capitalist reaction: fascism. U.S. officials admit the

"Democratic" Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani applauds fascist ARENA leader Roberto D'Aubuisson.



fascist ruling party, ARENA. During the battle the military and its allied death squads responded with indiscriminate massacres of civilians supplemented by selective killings of opponents. In working-class areas where the FMLN concentrated, the army used heavy guns, bombers and helicopter gunships to reduce neighborhoods and housing projects to rubble.

U.S. officials tut-tutted the killing of six Jesuit priests and ignored the slaughter of less well-known workers and peasants. Congress voted *not* to cut military aid to the Salvadoran death-squad regime, muttering only that it might do so if the priests' killers were not brought to justice some day. Meanwhile the FBI joined forces with the dreaded Salvadoran Special Investigations Unit to sabotage the inquiry; the only two known witnesses were brought to Miami and browbeaten to change their testimony. For both the U.S. and its fascist clients, the line is that there is no middle ground. Pluralism means the people's right to choose: you are either for us or dead.

El Salvador and Panama show that the Bush administration is attempting to shore up its neo-colonial empire at any cost. No worker or peasant in Central America is free to escape exploitation by Big Brother and friends. The deepening of world capitalism's economic decay means that profits have to be squeezed out even more viciously than before. The material basis for reforms in the super-exploited "third world" has vanished. And with the USSR going bankrupt, no help is coming from there either. Not a dime

presence of fascist thugs among those they arm but claim they are neutralized by government "democrats." The cover is important for the U.S. world propaganda line, but the actual program of the ruling ARENA party is to smash all independent worker and peasant organizations.

## THE REBELS' RADICAL REFORMISM

The aim of the FMLN was not to destroy the hated "oligarchy" or to seize state power for the workers and peasants — but to force the regime into negotiations that would bring the rebel leaders into a coalition government. This strategy, which the FMLN and its predecessors have been pushing in various ways for ten years, proves that military heroism is no antidote to political bankruptcy.

At one point the rebels took the fight to the neighborhoods of the oligarchs, most of whom support the death squads. Unfortunately, the FMLN only briefly detained the bourgeois whose homes they occupied (and the U.S. Green Berets whom they trapped in a luxury hotel). For the rich, luxurious life in San Salvador and Miami goes on as usual.

Though the FMLN had spoken of the possibility of an all-out insurrection and general strike, it evidently made no serious effort to organize them. It accepted the aid of thousands of courageous supporters who supplied and sheltered the guerrillas and built barricades; it offered guns to those who agreed to join the guerrillas. But it did not arm or prepare the masses for their own self-defense.

The FMLN's general strike call, two days into the

fighting, had all the earmarks of an afterthought; in any case, workers had to stay home because of the ongoing warfare. After a week or so the rebels retreated from the poor neighborhoods, leaving the masses unarmed and defenseless against the armed forces. Rebel leaders continued to act as though *they* were the movement and everyone else just auxiliary.

#### FUTILE PACIFISM, TREACHEROUS NATIONALISM

Why this elitist reformism? The FMLN arose out of the urban workers' and slum-dwellers' struggles of the 1970s. It was an amalgam of left-nationalist tendencies, most of which split from the reformist, trade-union based Communist Party. Despite the radical versions of Stalinism adopted by some wings, none broke with the CP's middle-class elitist politics. The absence of an international working-class alternative pole enabled the FMLN to limit their program to reformist nationalist goals.

The FMLN is hopelessly dedicated to a coalition government — with people they themselves call fascists! But they at least are fighting the reaction. Liberals — including Archbishop Rivera y Damas and the rebels' main political allies, the social and Christian democrats Guillermo Ungo and Ruben Zamora — attacked them for resorting to armed struggle. They too want negotiations but reject an all-out fight, proving that they prefer fascism to the possibility of the working masses' taking power.

Another treacherous blow came from the FMLN's fellow nationalist guerrillas, the Nicaraguan Sandinistas. At the December summit conference of Central American presidents in Costa Rica, Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega signed the joint statement that said in part:

**"The presidents of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica support the Government of El Salvador in its repeated proposal to find a solution to the Salvadoran conflict through peaceful and democratic means and in that sense repeat their vehement appeal that the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front immediately and effectively cease its hostilities in that**

**fraternal country and that it join the process of dialogue which has already begun."** (*New York Times*, December 13.)

This smarmy pronouncement would be an outrage from any source, since it endorses the democratic legitimacy of the Salvadoran regime and implies that ARENA, not the rebels, are the ones "vehemently appealing" for dialogue. But coming from the Nicaraguans it is a stab in the back. The FMLN immediately and correctly denounced the betrayal, only to get an unofficial apology from the Sandinistas explaining feebly that the condemnation was vaguely worded and they didn't really mean it!

#### FAKE INTERNATIONALISM

As good nationalists and fake internationalists, the Sandinistas continually try to make their peace with the U.S. (That is what the FMLN itself is trying to do.) But the rape of Panama has set the stage for greater pressure on Nicaragua and El Salvador both, no matter what concessions the FMLN or the Sandinistas make short of complete capitulation.

The bloody history of El Salvador demonstrates that a strategy based on elitist guerrillaism, narrow nationalism and middle-class conciliationism is totally unrealistic. While revolution must of course start within national boundaries, what is criminal is to try to prevent their exportation. The U.S. will happily pick off isolated revolutions country by country. The working-class movement is vital, and only the mass arming of the workers and rural laborers can defend the class struggle from the enemy state.

Working-class fighters in any "third-world" country need to dedicate themselves to smashing the power of the bourgeoisie, political and economic. They need not coalitions but a workers' and peasants' government in a proletarian state; not a chimerical deal with the bosses but the expropriation of the land and factories. From their well-wishers in the U.S. they need not on-again, off-again alliances with the bourgeois Democrats but an uncompromising fight against both parties of imperialism. ■

## Negotiations With Whom?

The dominant force in the U.S. movement against intervention in Central America is CISPES, the Committee in Support of the People of El Salvador. CISPES has a long record of using demonstrations to foster the pro-capitalist views of the FMLN and appeal to liberals in Congress. As CISPES now admits, even the liberals are war criminals (*Alert!*, November 1989). But that is not the result of a "new bipartisan consensus"; it is a basic fact of life about politics in an imperialist country.

CISPES's uncritical and unthinking relation with the FMLN shows up in two reports by spokesman Mike Zielinski in the *Guardian*. In the November 22 issue:

**"The FMLN's current push does not preclude the possibility of further political initiatives to arrive at a negotiated settlement of the war. ... But the FMLN's offensive is designed to fundamentally alter the terms on which the negotiations could take place. The rebels are clearly calling for the definitive removal of ARENA and the military from El Salvador's political life."**

Two weeks later he rewrote the same paragraph:

**"The FMLN's stepped-up military actions do not preclude the possibility of negotiations to resolve the war, as the rebels continue to favor a political solution leading to the formation of a new government. ... The insurgents called for direct negotiations with the armed forces, arguing that the military represents the real power within the government."**

One week the rebels can't negotiate with the military; another, they can't negotiate with anyone else. Of course, whether they negotiate with the military or with politicians make no difference at all: both represent the same bloodthirsty bourgeoisie. Negotiating with *any* of them — above all for a coalition *with* them — sows only confusion. As the FMLN pursues its long-term reformist policy of dealing with the regime over the heads of the masses, its U.S. acolytes obediently swallow every contradictory twist and turn.



# A Productive Conference

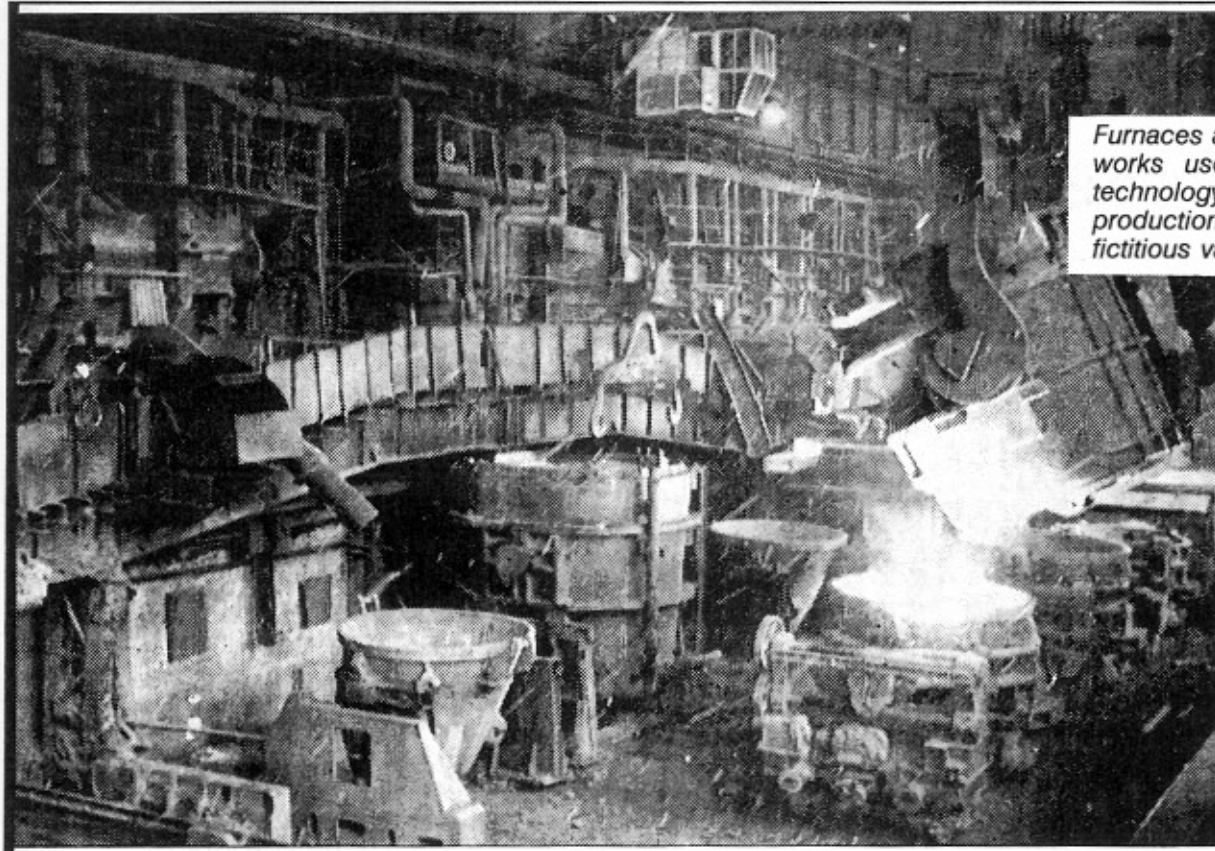
Last November two representatives of the LRP participated in an open conference on "Marxism and the Productive Forces." The meeting took place in London under the sponsorship of the Preparatory Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, a formation spearheaded by the Workers Revolutionary Party of Britain.

When we first saw the conference announced we were eager to attend because of the opportunity it promised to debate fundamental questions of Marxism. But we were also wary of the intentions of the organizers. In recent years there has been much discussion about discussion in "the Trotskyist milieu" but hardly any serious exchanges of views. Above all we had little reason to credit the promises of the WRP and the Preparatory Committee; we had experienced

tendencies vying with each other over which social democratic, Stalinist or Bonapartist force on the world scene to chase after. The WRP and its predecessors, led by Gerry Healy (one of the most notorious political criminals on the left) were as bad as any, but after they expelled Healy in 1985 the WRPers underwent a considerable ferment and re-examination of their basic conceptions. However, their flirtation with the Morenoites persuaded us that the new leadership was as bad as the old.

## A GENUINE OPEN CONFERENCE

Nevertheless we decided to take our chances. The question of the productive forces is this: is capitalism in this epoch (roughly this century) still a progressive mode of



*Furnaces at Polish steel works use century-old technology. Thus much production embodies fictitious value.*

their "preparations" for such conferences before.

In 1987 the WRP issued a call to "all Trotskyists" for an International Conference to re-examine basic questions of Marxism. But their leading partner was the LIT (International Workers League) led by Nahuel Moreno. In their checkered history the Morenoites have outdone the rest of the "Trotskyists" in their monomaniacal dedication to deceit. Based in Latin America, they have posed variously as Peronists, Castroists and Sandinistas when those currents were popular. In the course of the WRP's tryst with Moreno, all talk of an *open* conference was forgotten. (See "Maneuverism vs. Marxism," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 29.)

Indeed, it quickly became clear that this was only a maneuver — another in the series of mating calls for unprincipled organizational cohabitation that have punctuated the history of pseudo-Trotskyism. Since the 1950s this milieu has been home for an endless variety of groups and

production, or does it stand as a barrier to the development of the productive forces? This is no minor matter. The belief that our historical epoch is that of capitalist decay — of imperialism and war, revolution and counterrevolution, and the transition to socialism — is a hallmark of Leninist politics. It is key to understanding the world and a dividing line between centrism and revolutionary communism — a vital issue in the struggle to re-create the Fourth International as the authentic Trotskyist vanguard party.

The LRP has done much theoretical work on the subject, some of which has appeared in this journal. We went to London armed with a basic statement on the epoch (an edited version of the article, "Karl Marx and the World Crisis," which appeared in 1983 in issue No. 19 of this journal) and a leaflet counterposing our views to those of the WRP and other participants. (Copies of both are available to interested readers for \$1.00.)



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Contrary to our expectations, we and other contributors were allotted ample time to present our views; all were thoughtfully debated. The discussion on the whole was the most fruitful exchange among different tendencies on the far left that we have encountered. Approximately 90 people attended, mainly from the WRP and the Preparatory Committee. Organizations represented included the GOCQI (largely composed of East Europeans), Marxist Forum of Ireland – both in the Committee – plus Workers Power of Britain, the RKL of Austria and the GOR of Italy.

It is impossible for us to recapitulate fully the views of the various groups and individuals who spoke. The WRP has undertaken to publish the documents and discussion in book form; we will notify our readers when that happens. Here we can only comment on the others' ideas as we understood them.

We invite all tendencies present to amplify their viewpoints (at reasonable length) for publication in our magazine; we will of course respond. Unfortunately, Workers Power and the GOR have a record of failing to answer our past polemics. Given the confrontation with us before an international audience, it will prove more difficult for them to avoid answering in print.

In our conference leaflet we acknowledged that we and the WRP formally agreed that the present epoch was still that of capitalist decay. It had been described by Lenin and Trotsky and foreseen by Marx as the successor of the progressive bourgeois epoch of his day. We granted the WRP's point that "the forces of production are centered in human creative labor in its struggle with nature." In fact, today's so-called Marxists, in reducing Marx's conceptions (the commodity, exploitation, state property, planning and the productive forces) to technical categories and ignoring the human and class relationships embodied in them, have accepted bourgeois political economy and its objectifications.

#### DEBATING THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES

In our leaflet and at the podium, we also criticized the WRP for treating the question at the level of abstract humanism and thereby diminishing the significance of technological and scientific progress, itself an aspect of human creativity. As well, left abstract the argument is supra-historical. Marx, without dropping an iota of his early humanism, went on to show that under capitalism the struggle of humanity to develop its creative capacities took the form of the class struggle.

We charged the WRP with leaving the matter at a high level of abstraction in order to defend "orthodoxy" without dealing with the concrete developments of our era. These developments have given rise to the rampant "common sense" view – empiricism – that sees capitalism continuing to develop all-sidedly and enormously. But orthodoxy has no real answer to empiricism. Once the orthodoxist is forced to deal with the reality he seeks to evade, he capitulates to the alleged progressiveness of capitalism. Sunday sermons mask the daily surrender to reformism.

Although the WRP could hardly be accused of capitulating to "green" ideology, we noted that the abstractness of its arguments – human creativity pitted against the destructive character of capitalism today – conceded too much ground to this middle-class "post-Marxist" approach.

#### WHAT 'STAGNATION' MEANS

We advocated Trotsky's analysis of the epoch: stagnation of the productive forces means that imperialism and monopoly act as barriers to their development. Contrary to what seemed to be the WRP's view, this does not say that production remains static without change or development. On the contrary, the impulsion toward change remains but is countered by overriding destructive forces. Industry, for example, grows in one sector or region of the world at the expense of others; development today is answered by depression and war tomorrow. Over time and space, the system "is no longer capable of progress as a whole." Its overall decay is carried out through violent ebbs and flows of the economy and the class struggle.

As well, contrary to impressionists, much of the capital the system produces is fictitious, value without use. Paper claims by capitalists for shares of value far outstrip the quantities actually produced by workers. The debt crisis overwhelming much of the "third world" and the Stalinist states is a powerful illustration of this reality of modern-day capitalism.

The material basis for empiricist illusions in organic capitalist development is the post-World War II boom. In the past the Healyite WRP had denied the boom, daily trumpeting the imminence of the system's collapse. A static interpretation of the epoch also leaves the boom unaccounted for. In contrast, Trotsky's analysis of an explosive epoch had enabled him to make a remarkable prediction in 1928 (in *The Third International after Lenin*):

**"Theoretically, to be sure, even a new chapter of a general capitalist progress in the most powerful, ruling, and leading countries is not excluded. But for this, capitalism would first have to overcome barriers of a class as well as of an interstate character. It would have to strangle the proletarian revolution for a long time; it would have to enslave China completely, overthrow the Soviet republic, and so forth. We are still a long way removed from all this."**

We disagree with Trotsky on one major question: at the end of the 1930s we say that the bureaucratic counter-revolution in the USSR culminated in the restoration of capitalism. Trotsky regarded Stalin's great purges as a "preventive civil war" waged by a weak petty-bourgeois bureaucracy momentarily straddling the workers' state. He held that this contradictory condition would be resolved by the coming world war, either with the imperialist restoration of bourgeois property or by proletarian revolutions. But the violent destruction of the remnants of Bolshevism signalled the solidification of Stalinist class rule as a degenerate form of capitalism.

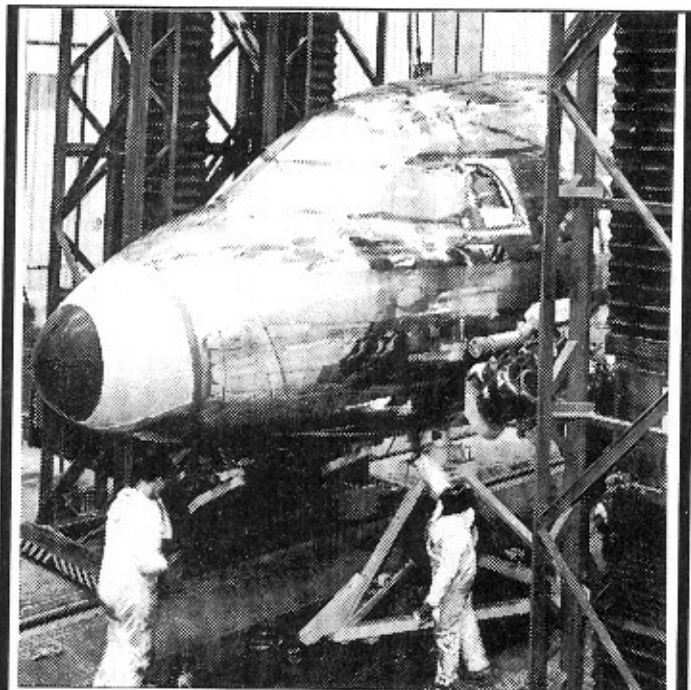
#### THE POSTWAR BOOM

The Stalinists' triumph in the USSR allowed the state bureaucracy to share the spoils of the world war. They crushed working class uprisings in East Europe and betrayed revolutionary movements in West Europe and the colonies. This worldwide working-class defeat was the condition for the postwar expansion under the hegemony of the United States. It also disoriented and finally destroyed the Fourth International, making it appear that the Stalinist and social democratic alterations of capitalism were progressive and even revolutionary.

The GOR and Workers Power were the main advocates of the position that the current epoch was not inherently one of stagnation. The GOR asserted that capitalism *always* had to expand the productive forces, citing the postwar

period as evidence. It dismissed the WRP's linking of the productive forces to human creativity as "romantic." Not accidentally, the GOR still maintains that the Stalinist states are distorted expressions of working-class rule and that Stalinism "can play a relatively revolutionary role" — a highly cynical view of the working class.

Workers Power rejected the concept of stagnation for this epoch even as a tendency. The epoch consists of per-



Fokker F-100 assembly line. Arms industry uses productive advances to drain value from production.

iods when capitalism expands the productive forces not only sectorally but overall, as well as periods in which it acts as a barrier. Lenin and Trotsky's perception of stagnation, they say, was appropriate for the times when they wrote but was falsely generalized to the epoch as a whole. We replied that this was a non-dialectical attitude that rejects a fundamental overview of the epoch. With such a "balanced" outlook it is easy for Workers Power to regard reformism and Stalinism not as counterrevolutionary but as a "combination" of revolution and counterrevolution.

A heated debate centered on these questions, with the LRP critically aligned with the WRP and Preparatory Committee against the GOR and Workers Power. We were pleased that in the struggle our arguments had an effect on our allies. One leading WRPer said he was now convinced that epochal stagnation was tendential rather than absolute. Another accepted in part our criticism that the WRP conceded too much to abstract humanists. On the other hand, a third WRPer rejected the idea of a major working-class defeat after World War II, arguing that there had indeed been a setback that prevented socialist revolutions but no massacres or extreme bloodshed.

#### TASKS FACING THE WRP

Not surprisingly, the WRP comrades did not agree with us that the Stalinist countries were statified capitalist. They still hold the degenerated/deformed workers' state theory invented by defensists in the late 1940s. But they did recognize the need to re-examine the question, given the record

of defensists in capitulating to Stalinism and social democracy — and especially the social earthquake shaking the Eastern bloc. They challenged us to engage in a joint discussion and review of our ideas, and we of course accepted.

Given its history, we approach discussion and practical collaboration with the WRP with some vigilance. But we make no prejudgments which would impede honest discussion. The importance of re-creating the Fourth International requires exploring such avenues when they open up.

It must be said to the credit of the sponsors, that the promises of openness and room for give and take at the conference were fulfilled and that the commitment to dogmatic orthodoxy by the WRP was far less than we had anticipated. The ferment and willingness to tackle hard questions seemed strong. WRPers stated that their infatuation with the Morenoites had been a terrible mistake and that their critics had been largely correct.

The same spirit that led these erstwhile followers of Healy to publicly expose and search for sources of their past errors should lead them to draw up a balance sheet of their dealings with Moreno and the collapse of their initially promising open conference. For example, the argumentation used by *Workers Press* to defend the Morenoites' Simon Bolivar Brigade in Nicaragua — don't criticize if you weren't there — is the stock-in-trade of every Stalinist apologist for the ANC, SWAPO and other bourgeois nationalist movements in the third world that the WRP criticizes today.

We are not asking for *mea culpas* from the WRP, only critical evaluation of the past in order to guide conduct in the present and future. The struggle to re-create an authentic communist Fourth International deserves no less.

When other defensists were theoretically rationalizing the "progressive and revolutionary aspects" of Stalinism and reformism, the WRP under Healy would have none of it. Through orthodoxy it stoutly maintained that Stalinism was thoroughly counterrevolutionary. But orthodoxy also turned the dialectic into religious mysticism. For all its talk about "method," the WRP like all the others avoided applying Marxism to the question of how counterrevolutionary Stalinism could make the socialist revolution!

The WRP of today, having abandoned the orthodox shroud, now has to explore whether with its understanding of the epoch and the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism it can explain the postwar expansion of the USSR and resuscitation of capitalism as a whole. Most defensists, consciously or not, account for the working-class setbacks by denying the proletariat's revolutionary capacity. Ultimately this is a cynical view of human nature itself induced by the workers' defeats.

We find the explanation for capitalism's postwar triumph in the strength that statified capitalism gained by smashing and usurping the workers' state. But we also see the working-class-based revolutions today as a sign that the heyday of postwar capitalism is ended — in the West as well as the East. We have seen no alternative interpretation that preserves the fundamental Marxist belief in the potential for genuine human liberation.

These are exhilarating times for Marxists. The proletariat is moving again, challenging all the "old crap." Authentic communist leadership must be re-created. We hope that the WRP and others will join us in finding solutions to the methodological and practical tasks communists face. The choice facing humanity once again, and with startling clarity, is socialism or barbarism — the fruition of human culture or the ruin of all productive achievements. ■

# East Europe

*continued from page 1*

CP and non-party reformists dominate the government.

In December Romania exploded. The popular uprising was met with savage violence by a regime devoid of any legitimacy except naked force. Nicolae Ceausescu, the arch-Stalinist tyrant, was insanely accommodating to imperialist creditors — he starved the country to pay off his foreign debt at one stroke — and was (not coincidentally) an old friend of U.S. presidents and Israel, even an honorary Knight of the British Empire. The murderous defense of a regime in its death throes by the security forces was the ultimate assertion of statified capitalist property: citizens are treated as near-slaves whose labor power serves at the rulers' beck and call.

## OLD GARBAGE IN NEW PAILS

These mass revolutions are historic achievements, yet they are only partial victories. Governments have fallen, but the underlying social relations of exploitation remain. Even though ministers and presidents have been changed, the fundamental apparatus of the state is intact: army and police (except for special squads like the Stasi in East Germany and the Securitate in Romania) have sworn fealty to the new regimes. And in each case a substantial fraction of the new cabinet comes from the old ruling party — a symbol of continuity in the face of revolution.

All this is also true in Poland and Hungary, where earlier in the year the ruling parties had the foresight to make deals at the top with opposition politicians in order to preempt mass uprisings. Last summer the Polish CP, badly beaten in the June elections, formed a coalition government with the reformist intellectuals of Solidarity. The Hungarian rulers promised multi-party democracy, opened the borders to the West and renounced their Communist past in favor of social democracy. (The party's change of name to the Socialist Party echoes an earlier shift: in 1956 the Communists lyingly became the Socialist Workers Party after crushing the workers' revolution.) Bulgaria is undergoing a similar process.

Across East Europe quasi-democratic interludes have begun. By now, one-party rule has formally ended in six countries. There is a considerable element of hypocrisy involved, as born-again "democratic socialist" Stalinists point accusatory fingers at chieftains at whose feet they grovelled the day before. And the disastrous economic crises that triggered the protest movements are nowhere near being solved, despite the major changes under way.

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. The leading groups — New Forum in the DDR, Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, National Salvation Front in Romania — have already taken steps to prevent their mass supporters from gaining any direct control over government.

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 West-

ern 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. Capitalism of any variety will ultimately turn to whatever means are necessary to stabilize its rule.

## THE DEATH AGONY OF STALINISM

Stalinist state power was imposed from outside in East Europe after the defeat of the Nazis in World War II. Throughout the region working-class movements seized factories and formed local revolutionary committees after the war, but these were crushed by the victorious Soviet army and its CP allies. Initially the Stalinists set up coalition governments and "mixed economies" jointly with national bourgeois forces. Only after the workers were decisively defeated did the CPs dare to nationalize the major means of production and assert their own monolithic rule.

For a time the Stalinist system of "socialism in one country" was able to increase production and living stan-



*Hundreds of thousands launch revolution in Prague. Workers will throw off reformists now in the saddle.*

dards by investing within the national borders the surplus value extracted from the workers and peasants. But all attempts at national self-sufficiency in the 20th century are doomed to failure. The collapse of Stalinism results from the severe crises brought about by the contradictions of this system of statified capitalism.

Nationalized property, created by the 1917 revolution in Russia, was usurped by the bureaucracy under Stalin in the 1930s. In a genuine workers' state such proletarian property forms are a powerful weapon for advancing the productive forces; under capitalism after an initial impetus they form a barrier to initiative and development. The cheap public housing, health and transport services and full employment that Stalinism was forced to concede both mired the workers in an equality of poverty and blocked the way to efficient exploitation.

World capitalism as a whole has been in economic decline since the end of the post-World War II boom in the early 1970s. The regimes of the East have faced added

problems because of the deformed gains of the working class. Hence the rulers have long sought to "reform" their economies with Western-style "incentives" – unemployment and austerity – to squeeze more value out of the workers.

The workers' limited advantages deteriorated badly over the past fifteen years, and the rulers lost whatever mass support they had left. Stalinist "socialism" became a curse, no longer a mixed blessing. The power of the Polish working-class struggle in 1980-81 was the final warning, and reformist Soviet leaders – first Andropov and now Gorbachev – saw the handwriting on the wall. Even though Polish Solidarity was militarily crushed, the rulers had to find a way out.

## THE POST-STALINIST ECONOMIES

A year ago we wrote:

**"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 Gorbachev reform project of *glasnost* and *perestroika* has lent legitimacy to the protests and re-thinking. But it offers no solution: the Stalinist regimes are approaching a crisis of their very existence."** (*Proletarian Revolution*, Winter 1989.)

That crisis has now been reached. Where then are the Eastern economies going? First, the reformists all want partial decentralization and more privatization. As we explained last year:

**"In the end the rulers' solution may be to try to restore the situation of the 1945-48 period, when the Stalinists ruled in collaboration with social democrats and bourgeois forces over 'mixed economies.' At that time Stalinization had yet to reach full force: all-out nationalization of industry had to await the decapitation and defeat of the working class."**

Indeed, now that the workers' movement is reviving, statified property no longer looks so attractive to the bosses. As Leon Trotsky once wrote, it is "too tempting" an object for a rebellious working class since it reveals plainly the identity between property ownership and the state.

Nevertheless, significant industries will remain in state hands in order to maintain stability and pacify the workers. But they will be granted more independence in order to be free to extract greater profits. The need for statification remains inexorable in contemporary capitalism, despite the current triumph of free enterprise ideology. The post-Stalinist rulers are search for a comfortable resting place between their old-style economies and all-out privatization.

Above all, the new governments are creating wide openings for Western capital. Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia have applied for emergency aid from the imperialist International Monetary Fund (IMF) and are even welcoming the strings that are inevitably attached. The reformist rulers are willing to subject their nations to what is in effect neo-colonialism – in the hopes that new investments can ease the potentially revolutionary working-class unrest and that they get a small share of the increased surplus value extracted. The ideology of the free market, promoted as the main guarantor of democracy, is supposed to convince the workers, the creators of surplus value, that austerity and sacrifice are in their interest.

Decadent top bureaucrats have long tried to live like respectable bourgeois. Now they are scurrying to remake themselves as private capitalists. Stalinist officials in Hun-

gary and Poland are already buying up state firms at bargain rates for their own profit, and the practice is spreading. The "kleptocracy" knows a good deal when it sees one.

Anti-Stalinist revolutions have not occurred everywhere. China was one of the first to try economic decentralization, with ample concessions to the West. Its old guard rulers partially retreated because they feared that demands for democracy were spreading to the working class and could undermine their class power; the Tiananmen massacre was the result. Market mechanisms will still be used to intensify exploitation, and the contradictions of capitalism will not be warded off. Despite the ruling class's bloodiness, new rebellions are inevitable – and given China's continuing econom-



*Azerbaijan: attacks against Armenians are not mass lunacy but ruling-class legacy.*

ic crisis and the revolutionary example of East Europe, they may come soon.

## THE SOVIET CAULDRON

In the USSR a move to end one-party rule was rejected by the new but still Communist-dominated Soviet legislature. Economic changes are moving more slowly than in East Europe. The difference stems from several causes:

1) The USSR actually had a workers' revolution. Its legacy of egalitarianism was not wiped out despite the Stalinists' efforts; people still view privatization and profiteering with deep suspicion. As well, there is still a working-class memory of Leninism and proletarian soviets, as the miners' strike of last summer showed.

2) The Soviet bureaucracy was not a foreign importation in Russia itself. Indeed, it established its nationalist credentials by defeating Nazism in World War II. Thus the conservative bureaucrats who hypocritically champion workers' anti-capitalist concerns can still win a hearing.

3) The East European reformers have Moscow's backing for their social experiments. This means not only that Gorbachev has promised to keep hands off. It also implies that if the masses explode against the new reforms, Soviet military power remains to police the region. That last resort is not available to the Soviet rulers if *their* workers threaten revolution. Hence their greater caution. But if the waters are proven safe in East Europe, the Soviets may well follow closely behind.

4) If nationalism and its chauvinist expressions are serious problems in East Europe, they are immense in the USSR. Like the Czarist empire before it, the Soviet Union

# Imperialism Triumphant?

Western imperialists are gloating that the "Marxist" world system has collapsed and no longer threatens their own. But there is a nervous edge to their tittering, for they are laughing at their own funeral.

The bourgeoisie cannot be happy that it is the working classes that is bringing governments to heel. It watches with satisfaction as Stalinism collapses – but with trepidation at the movement that is hammering down its walls.

Imperialists have to think twice about exulting over the overthrow of *any* form of property or ruling class. Liberation is contagious, and not everyone enjoys the prosperity that the intellectuals of the East think they will find by joining the West. Leipzig and Prague might not yet find echoes in Paris and New York, but they easily could in Manila and Soweto. Stalinism has long been a prop for imperialism as a whole, and with its anti-imperialist pretensions dropped, people fighting oppression will have one less illusion to overcome.

But that is not the end of it. To maintain world stability, imperialism now has to prop up Gorbachev and the USSR.

The situation in the USSR is perilous not only for Gorbachev but for capitalists everywhere. The Soviet Union is in imminent danger of dismemberment, as national movements burgeon. As well, the enormous power of the miners' strikes in Russia, the Ukraine and Siberia showed the world just how fragile Stalinist power is.

The strikes were aimed not just at past corruptions but against the overtly capitalist measures of his very own perestroika. Gorbachev himself reportedly warned market-oriented economists that too rapid a transition "would result in a popular revolution that would sweep away the most well-intentioned government." (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, December 24.)

If the Russian empire blows up, all hope of stability in East Europe is doomed as well. That is why James Baker,

U.S. Secretary of State, defies the "captive nations" crowd in the Republican party and seeks to restrain Baltic separatism – and why Bush, after much vacillation, finally clasped Gorbachev to his bosom at Malta and declared the Cold War ended.

Baker also hastened to East Berlin in December to bolster the new Communist leadership. Washington even gave Moscow the green light to send in Warsaw Pact troops to stabilize Romania. The fear of instability is so great that Bush outraged U.S. public opinion left and right by publicly embracing Deng Xiaoping in China, letting the Beijing massacre slide down the diplomatic memory hole.

The East European upheaval is also pulling apart the Western alliance, thereby exacerbating another form of instability. West German politicians are wielding national unification as a club to expand their already leading role in West Europe. Even though they want no more than federation with the DDR, their dominant economic influence throughout East Europe is growing. London and Washington are both openly wary of Bonn's new status, even though they accept that Prime Minister Kohl needs to do something to quiet the dangerous unrest next door.

The U.S. and its allies even oppose the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact – not just because they want it to be able to pacify East Europe but also to give NATO an ostensible reason for existence. They need the tie holding together their own precarious relationship. Meanwhile Japan's international power is strengthening, and its politicians vie with each other in expressing distrust of Washington and its stepped-up Japan-baiting.

Without the glue of the Stalinist enemy the Western imperialist alliance is breaking apart. The workers of the East have upset the entire balance of power, and no one has yet devised a new world order. And they are not done. If the match they have lit ignites the workers of the USSR, then imperialism's glee will be short-lived indeed.

is a prison-house of nations. Given the domination of the Russian nation over the others, which Gorbachev has to preserve, the bureaucracy must be cautious about ceding too much economic or political leeway. Otherwise independence movements will avalanche. As well, the rivalries among the subordinated nationalities have already generated pogroms which challenge Moscow's rule and Gorbachev's reforms.

There is no greater proof of the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism than the fact that, under the rubric of "socialism in one country" (i.e., national capitalism), it deepened the divide-and-conquer tactics of Czarism. The oppressors' chauvinism remained, and sadly the rebellious workers and peasants of the subordinated nations will again have to learn that nationalism does not lead to national liberation. This in the lands that proved in 1917 that only socialist revolution could bring genuine self-determination!

## THE ATTACK ON THE WORKING CLASS

Stalinism can no longer rule in the old way. Either it will "reform" itself into dependency on Western imperialism – or face the prospect of social revolution. And if it does succeed in transforming itself into dependency on the

West, it will not be as democracies but as a patchwork of authoritarian and fascist statelets guarded by a reactionary Russian subimperialism acting for the "democratic" powers.

As the post-Stalinist regimes accelerate their devolution toward market capitalism, the real meaning of living under imperialist pressure is already becoming clear. In Poland, the last Stalinist-run cabinet let market "reforms" run wild in the hope of forcing the working class to its knees. And the succeeding Solidarity ministers have not yet found a way to persuade workers to accept the rigors of open capitalism.

Lech Walesa, the hero of Western capitalists and trade union officials alike, made clear in mid-December just what kind of "democracy" East European workers could look forward to under the new post-Stalinist regimes. He asked that the Solidarity-CP coalition be given wide powers to promulgate its economic "reforms" by decree, in order to overcome opposition from working people. Walesa has put his finger on the essence of bourgeois pseudo-democracy: the masses may speak but must have no power to decide their future. Bourgeois "champions" of democracy in the West are pleased with his proposal – what's wrong with a little authoritarianism when profits are at stake?

The reform measures Walesa backs were introduced in January. They include sharp price hikes and the end of state subsidies for key consumer goods. Overall, consumer prices are expected to double in three months, and wages and incomes will be held down.

But the widespread sentiment among workers for market forms and decentralization is a highly transient phenomenon. Objective trends inherent in capitalism, statified or not, dictate concentration and centralization. The workers' needs are already destroying their illusions in capitalism, and the pace will accelerate as the revolutionary crisis of the East unfolds. An editor of a Warsaw business magazine denounced the workers' opposition to capitalism's so-called efficiency: "Our people hate Communism, but when you start talking about privatization, many of them act like Communists." (*New York Times*, November 30.) Polish coal miners have already launched a strike against the new wage austerity policy, an integral part of the scheme to introduce bourgeois forms.

In the other post-Stalinist states the workers will soon learn the same lesson. Hungarian premier Miklos Nemeth has a similar scheme. Under pressure from the IMF he is demanding a new austerity budget that would entail a rise in unemployment to Western levels and an end to desperately needed housing subsidies. He also wants parliamentary approval without a fight. In Czechoslovakia too, the leading

## The Fascist Threat

Under Stalinism as in the rest of the world, greater repression is the long-term necessity for capitalism. This means the crushing of the working class in key nations. Those forces, reformist and centrist alike, who echo capitalism's call for "pluralism" and "democracy" as an answer are creating illusions and paving the way for the alternative solution to disastrous crisis: fascism.

In East Germany, much is already being done by pro-capitalist elements to keep the workers from linking up with their revolutionary East-bloc neighbors. Nationalism and racism get heavy play in order to promote unification with West Germany — in reality a form of semi-colonial subordination. Nests of neo-fascists, possibly imported from the West, have taken advantage of the democratic turn and open borders. Whatever the strength of fascism in the DDR, ultra-chauvinist anti-Jewish forces are growing in Poland, among Stalinists and anti-Stalinist clerical elements. And in the USSR, Pamyat, the Russian fascist organization, openly hostile to the October revolution yet nurtured by "socialist" bureaucrats, is advancing.

The flames of vicious national chauvinism are also burning in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. (In Romania they may have temporarily been quelled by the universality of hatred for the old regime, but without a solution to the crisis there too they will revive.) Their fuel is not mystical "ancient prejudices," as the Western press explains, but material conditions — scarcity, poverty, repression — and the consequent search for scapegoats in the absence of scientific (Marxist) understanding. It is capitalism with its inherent nationalism and inequality that fans the flames; the middle-class reformists demanding more capitalism are adding fuel to the fire.

economic authorities led by Valtr Komarek are advocates of Reaganite free-market theories.

There is little chance of these schemes succeeding. Where reformist policies have been in effect the longest, Yugoslavia, they have clearly failed. Poland, despite Western "support" and wholesale reforms, is teetering on the edge of disaster, and Hungary is not far behind. Above all, the proof of the unworkability of IMF-type reforms lies in the disastrous economies of countries like Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, where they have been in practice for years.

## THE LIMITS OF 'FREEDOM'

Stability in the West takes the form of electoral democracy. Its existence rests upon the growth, under imperialism, of the middle layers of capitalist society including the labor aristocracy. Trotsky compared modern imperialism with Ancient Greece: enslavement of much of the world is what pays for bourgeois democracy and spawns illusions in reformism.

As the glitter of prosperity fades these middle strata are rapidly depleting. And crisis is deeper in the East, so there is no prospect of building them there overnight, beyond the small petty-bourgeois layers that already exist. Crisis-ridden capitalism is in no condition to bail out the decomposing Stalinist system. Thus democracy and pluralism, already disintegrating in the West, are only mirages in the East. The only possible "solution" is that of China's long march to accommodate imperialism: abandon all democratic pretense and offer reservoirs of cheap labor to the world market.

Nevertheless, the democratic facade is a necessity for imperialism at a time when the masses are running wild and overthrowing governments. It is no accident that AFL-CIO and West German Social Democratic agents are crisscrossing East Europe to build up new trade unions. These are part of the facade and safer than other workers' organizations, like strike committees.

In the short run Washington will try to build up centrist forces like the ruling coalition in Poland. A combination of reformist intellectuals, unionists who have some clout with the workers, clergy and Christian democrats where available, plus segments of the old Stalinist order — bureaucrats, managers, military and security forces open to collaboration with the private bourgeoisie.

Only in desperation would the U.S. (or Moscow for that matter) accept governments of the democratic intelligentsia and the labor reformists *alone*. They are too unstable to brake the mass movement by themselves.

But in the long run, when market "reforms" succeed in inflaming the workers and the middle classes prove too weak a base, the facade of democracy will be junked. The West and its clients will have to slow down any wholesale elimination of state property. The future may well see Stalinist armies and secret police defending private property from the workers, while Western bankers and investors defend not only private but also state property.

## REVOLUTIONARY LESSONS

The post-Stalinists have learned well the methods of their bourgeois brothers. For all bosses, their narrow interests are defined as the "national interests" of all. If the workers remain tied to the middle classes and the rising bourgeoisie, the "democracy" that all social forces are clamoring for will be used to suppress them. The workers



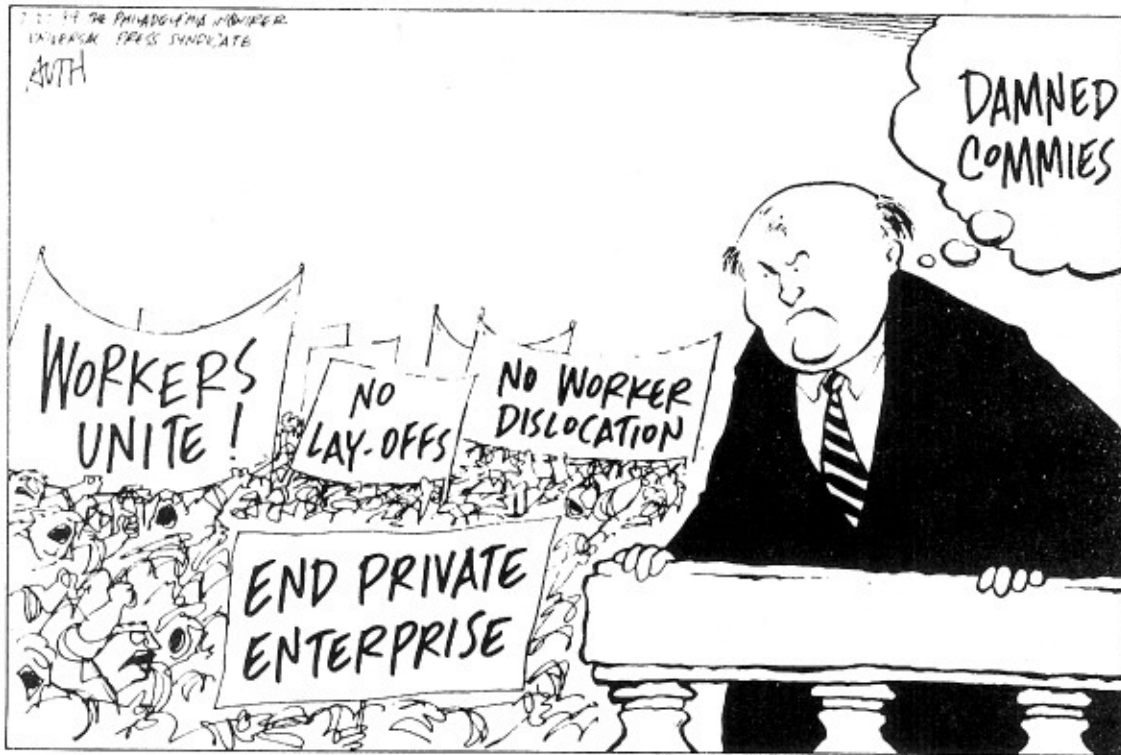
have to fight for their own class interests through their own working-class party.

The situation in East Europe is in many ways parallel to Russia in 1917, after the February revolution – or to Portugal in 1974 and Iran in 1979 after totalitarian regimes were ousted. The masses' struggles brought down oppressive regimes, and the question was posed: which way forward?

In 1917 when the bourgeois Provisional Government was formed, all the Russian workers' parties gave it one or another degree of support – even the revolutionary Bolsheviks, "insofar as it struggles against reaction or counterrevo-

**Permanent revolution.** The transformations so far have been political revolutions, the loss of power by one capitalist sector to the advantage of others. Communists stand for extending the revolution through *proletarian socialist revolutions* to establish workers' states. Therefore we urge the working class to give *no support to the provisional governments*, whether post-Stalinist or popular-frontist coalitions.

**Transitional demands** pointing to working-class power: *workers' councils* (the equivalent of the Russian soviets of 1917) along with delegated central bodies, and *workers' militias*. Outstanding concrete examples exist: in 1980 the



lution." Lenin broke through the pseudo-democratic miasma upon his arrival from exile in April. "This government is not ours," he said. "No confidence, no support to the Provisional Government." Only after a sharp struggle did his slogans convince the Bolshevik party.

The main lesson for today of the Russian revolution of 1917 is embodied in Lenin's "April Theses" and Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution: the only way to win the masses' democratic aspirations is to extend the revolution beyond bourgeois-democratic limits. "Democratic" bourgeois states are just as exploitative as oppressive ones, especially when imperialist financiers march in to demand more surplus value from the workers. The Provisional Government of Kerensky, had it been left in power, would have opened the door to militarist and imperialist domination.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM

The critical need in Eastern Europe today is for the most advanced layers of the working class to build proletarian revolutionary parties to fight for socialist revolutions. Genuine socialism has nothing in common with the decadent bureaucratic Stalinist system now falling apart. But to convince the much-abused East-bloc workers, authentic communists in these nations have to raise a concrete revolutionary program. This includes:

workers of Gdansk in Poland created their Interfactory Strike Committees (MKSs), which duelled the official government for state power. The striking Soviet coal miners last July also ran their towns and replace the police with their own embryonic militias. (See "Soviet Strikes Shake Gorbachev," *Proletarian Revolution*, Fall 1989.)

We are not against forming genuine unions, but in revolutionary times it is possible to build workers' dual power institutions that point beyond reforms. Along with councils, that includes *strike committees* to run *general strikes* against the austerity attacks.

**Economic demands.** Given the severe crises of varying depth in different countries, communists raise a variety of transitional economic demands. The *sliding scale of wages*, to mandate wage rises along with prices; the *sliding scale of hours*, to divide the necessary work equally and do away with mass unemployment; the *centralization of industry* as opposed to privatization, to maintain and expand essential industries and services; *expropriation* of vital privatized firms without compensation, including those owned by foreign corporations; *public works* to employ the unemployed; *open the books* of private and state firms so that workers can themselves determine the profitability and "efficiency" of their workplaces; *workers' control* (supervision) of production, to keep close tabs on the state and private bosses.

## WINNING THE PEASANTRY

It is critical to win the support of the peasants. Therefore in specific countries Marxists call for a *workers' and farmers' government* in the workers' state. Demanding the division of the land by the peasants may also be necessary in some countries. In others, worker-peasant control over genuinely collectivized agricultural units would be possible.

In Poland, where the Stalinist regime allowed small-peasant farming to predominate, the newly unleashed capitalist markets will wipe out many peasant holdings. Giant corporate farms aided by Western imperialist financing will increasingly dominate. Revolutionaries must defend the dispossessed peasants lest they remain tied to reactionaries like Cardinal Glemp and become tools of a fascist revival.

**Internationalism.** For the first time in history, there are simultaneous workers' revolutions across half a continent. Workers must look to each other and to the workers of the USSR, not to the Western bosses, for support. Above all, the myth of solving the East German crisis through nationalist reunification must be countered. For all their talk of unity, the ruling classes East and West, German and non-German, will allow only a federation of separate German states under the domination of West German capital.

Now is an excellent time for the old Comintern slogan for voluntary federation of nations, the *Socialist United States of Europe*. Naturally communists assure German workers that a unified German workers' state is theirs to choose under such a federation.

To counter the poisons of racism and great-power nationalism, communists demand all *rights for immigrant workers and self-determination for all oppressed nationalities*.

To end the great-power threat that overshadows the Eastern revolutions, we raise *abolish the Warsaw Pact and the removal of Soviet troops from East Europe*. Even though they may be seen as a benevolent presence because of illusions in Gorbachev, these occupying armies will be used to crush working-class movements against the provisional governments, in the interests of Western imperialism as well as of the local ruling classes. A campaign for these demands would help puncture illusions in the West as well. The Western bourgeoisie will not support them, and those who want to end the Warsaw Pact will have to collaborate with anti-NATO movements in the West.

A crucial demand to crack the masses' illusions in the beneficence of the Western powers is the *repudiation of the international debt to imperialism*. The East European workers have no more obligation to pay for the misguided and corrupt deals incurred by their discredited rulers than do the workers and peasants of Latin America. As the oppositional Polish workers' leader Andrzej Gwiazda said,

**"We need a block of countries throughout the world to repudiate and refuse to pay this debt. We say that the people of Poland and Peru have the same struggle."**  
(*Socialist Action*, November 1989.)

Exactly. A concerted campaign by revolutionary governments across East Europe to renounce their ex-rulers' debts would spread to other oppressed nations and would undermine the foundations of imperialist world domination.

In the immediate period the most critical demands are "No support to the provisional governments," "Abolish the Warsaw Pact" and "Repudiate the imperialist debt." These slogans sharply cut through the new rulers' pretensions to democracy and expose their subservience to the bourgeois exploiters. They will serve to distinguish reformist forces from those with any claims to a revolutionary program.

## SUPPORT IN THE WEST

In the West, it is vital for revolutionists and all supporters of the Eastern revolutions to help clarify the key issues. Slogans for *cancellation of the debts, ending NATO and removing all U.S. troops from Europe* should be raised to break sympathetic workers from the ideological domination of imperialism. The imperialists are searching for excuses to retain NATO to police the world, now that its justification as Europe's "defender" is ended. The campaign against the U.S. military presence must be accompanied by a struggle against West European nationalism, which is equally imperialist.

The revolution in the East is just beginning. One consequence already apparent is that it is sorting out the candidates for leadership. The outright reformists, corrupted by capitalism's past victories, endorse "mixed economies" and "the market" as spurs to productivity. More left-wing types seek to create beneficent societies by urging politicians and planners to learn from their mistakes and open up "access" for "input" by the masses. The proletariat will need to win the intellectuals to its leadership. Their skills will prove helpful as "inputs" to *workers' planning* in the coming workers' states.

We have every confidence that the workers will reject all social engineers and condescending saviors. Not through parliaments or markets but in mass action does the working class learn its strength, become conscious of its goals and turn from narrow needs to those of all humanity. Through revolutionary struggle it fits itself for power.

Today we witness human creativity being reborn in the factories and mines, the squares and streets of the East. Before long the producers will also create the leadership they need — a vanguard dedicated to authentic communism. The old "Marxism" is dead! Long live Marxism! ■

# The Left and East Europe

More than any other question, Stalinism separates the "left" along class lines. Some defend the ruling bureaucracies as bastions, however weak, of socialism. Others oppose Stalinist rule but still see progressive aspects or wings in the bureaucracy. Only a few stand clearly with the proletariat against the bureaucracy, and among these there is considerable theoretical confusion.

The most consistently reactionary endorsement of the discredited Stalinist machines in the U.S. comes from Sam Marcy's Workers World Party. The WWP has backed every Stalinist counterrevolution: Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia

in 1968, Poland in 1981 and most recently the massacre of workers and students in China ordered by the great friend of Western capitalism, Deng Xiaoping. It denounces every mass struggle against the rulers of East Europe as imperialist or fascist in motivation. Marcy & Co. have the blood of militants and revolutionists all over their hands.

## PEOPLE'S DAILY LIES

The U.S. Communist Party has had to account for the mass struggles that shattered its very reason for existence, the Stalinist regimes. Its solution is to support the diehards

by trying to identify them with the popular movements. This results in a sort of journalism of the absurd.

For example, the *People's Daily World* printed a summary in its November 30 issue on the Czechoslovak events. First it quoted a pompous and self-serving lie by CP head Jakes: "We are fully aware that socialism's further development in Czechoslovakia cannot proceed without reforms. We shall not deviate from the course to improve the people's living standards." But not only had Jakes been the last person in the whole country to support the movement – he had been kicked out of office the week before!

Then the *PDW* quoted Jakes's replacement, Karel Urbánek: "It ['socialism without defects'] is a justified wish and also a statement of faith in the vitality of the social order which the people of this country chose 40 years ago." His members had such faith in him that he too was ousted right afterward.

Lest some readers remember that people in Czechoslovakia other than the CP leaders had something to do with the revolution, the *PDW* referred hesitantly to the general strike that had forced Jakes and others to resign: "A two-

The *PDW* wrote similarly on Hungary and East Germany. Its whole performance is a miserable attempt to suggest that the CP remained in control of events – while its authority was collapsing underneath it. The *PDW* cannot escape the fact that CP leaders everywhere are not "progressives who have made mistakes." They are counterrevolutionary swine who have befouled Marxism and set back the cause of humanity for generations.

#### SHOULD REFORMISTS LEAD THE WORKERS?

Left organizations with pretensions to revolutionary politics are graphically exposing their centrism. Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat (USec) and Tony Cliff's International Socialism tendency both nominally oppose the post-Stalinist governments but can't draw a clear line between the reformists and the revolutionary interests of the workers.

For example, Cliff's British SWP criticizes Polish Solidarity's governmental role, but only because of its bloc with the CP. The Solidarity ministers' own drastic, anti-working class capitalist program is overlooked or blamed on "concessions" to their Stalinist partners. To avoid such



Czechoslovak demonstrators carry bust of Stalin with sign, 'Nothing Lasts Forever.' Except 'leftist' theories that Stalinism is progressive.

hour general strike began at noon Monday but at press time details about the extent and nature of participation were still becoming available."

Let's see. The strike was on Monday, November 27, and details about its massive size and overwhelming proletarian participation were available in New York early that day. The same reporter was somehow able to cite protest leaders' remarks on November 28, the day after: "The opposition Civic Forum announced it was calling off all strikes and demonstrations following a meeting Tuesday with Premier Ladislav Adamec." So the *PDW* did know about this monumental anti-Stalinist event but wasn't telling.

deals, the SWP argues, Solidarity leaders "should be trying to strengthen factory organization in order to build a real power base." (*Socialist Worker Review*, September 1989.)

This is not an appeal to factory-based union organizations calling themselves Solidarity but to the liberal parliamentarians who usurped the name. It is a program for strengthening the reformists in government. To see what this means, imagine Lenin in 1917 calling on the Mensheviks to strengthen their factory base!

Lest we dismiss this as an accidental formulation, the Cliffite ISO in the U.S. approached the Czechoslovak reformers in the same way. They should stop trying to be

“constructive,” says the ISO: “For the opposition to press its advantage, it needs to deepen its links with workers ... It must raise issues ... which win the loyalty of workers.” (*Socialist Worker*, December 1989.) When this was written the Prague opposition hadn't yet made public the program that brought it into the government, but these were inevitable, given its leaders' class position. And unlike in Poland, the Czechoslovak reformers have no claim at all to be of the working class. The ISO's line would be like Lenin calling on the bourgeois Cadets to build proletarian ties.

#### TROTSKYIST TAILISM

Socialist Action, one of several USec affiliates in the U.S., has similar illusions in the new Czechoslovak president, Vaclav Havel, “one of the more far-seeing spokespersons of the radicalizing intelligentsia.” He is praised for urging the workers' strike committees to “remain on permanent alert and turn themselves into forums that will be the independent representatives of the society throughout the republic.” (*Socialist Action*, December 1989.)

If Havel is far-seeing, however, it's because he sees the workers as a power base for middle-class aims. He is asking them to give up their independent class power (he wants them to be independent of the Stalinists but not of “society,” i.e., the middle-class reformists. He has vaulted over the workers to power, and his friends in the new government will stab them in the back.

The USec as a whole backhandedly supports the various provisional governments by tailing oppositional bodies that, however critical they are of the post-Stalinist regimes, refuse to break from the reformist camp. In Poland, it adheres to the PPS/RD, a centrist split from the openly reformist PPS which has criticisms of the Mazowiecki government but no revolutionary hostility. For example, the PPS/RD issued a statement criticizing the Solidarity leaders for making the

bloc, but “nevertheless, the establishment of this government opens up the possibility of realizing social aspirations.” (*International Viewpoint*, October 16.) This is precisely wrong. The government was formed to fool the workers into postponing, not realizing, their aspirations.

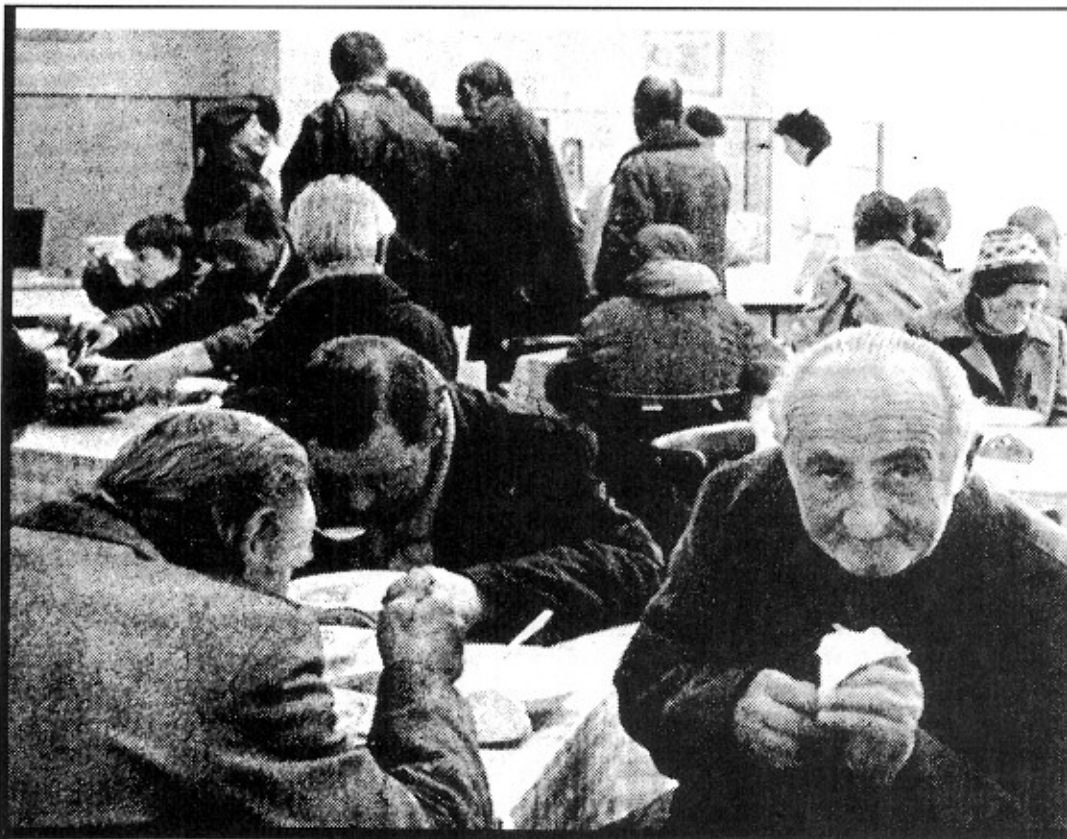
In Czechoslovakia the USec's supporters are active in the Left Alternative, which put forward an explicitly parliamentary and evolutionary program “for a democratic and self-managed socialism.” (*International Viewpoint*, December 11.) This document spells out the non-revolutionary content that has always been implicit in centrist notions of “self-management.” But it should not be surprising coming from the United Secretariat. Their theory of political revolution in the “deformed workers' states” has long had a distinct reformist air. This logic is now coming to fruition.

#### “REBUILD THE BERLIN WALL”?

The Spartacist tendency has a different motivation for supporting the quasi-democratic provisional governments: its habitual pro-Stalinism. These are the people who hailed Poland's military crackdown against ten million workers in 1981 and have all along endorsed the Berlin Wall — as an unfortunate but necessary tourniquet for stanching the “massive hemorrhage” of the DDR's workforce. That is soothing language for a nasty reality: shooting workers attempting to leave.

Today the Spartacists are caught in a bind. On the one hand, they have to appear to side with the working masses whose revolutions have brought down abhorrent regimes across the semi-continent. On the other, they still believe that only the CPs can defend state property and therefore their beloved Stalinist “workers' states.”

On the Berlin Wall they have been studiously ambiguous. “The Wall was a measure, albeit a bureaucratic one, to defend the collectivized economy against imperialist pres-



Warsaw soup kitchen serves 300 people daily. 'Free market' or not, capitalism keeps Poles in the soup.

sure," they said not long ago (*Workers Vanguard*, August 12, 1988). Meanwhile they were celebrating the DDR's "collective economy," despite its deformations:

**"During the 1980s ... the [East German] economy has continued to grow soundly, real wages have continued to improve and social programs ... to expand. ... In Western parlance this would certainly be termed an 'economic miracle.' "** (March 11, 1988.)

With such a paradise to defend, when the wall came tumbling down we fully expected the Spartacists to rush to Berlin to put it back together again. But opportunism intervened. "What brought the Wall down in the end was not imperialist revanchism, but social struggle by the East German masses. Today, free passage across the Wall can also serve as a springboard for revolutionary unity and common struggle by the working masses." (November 24.)

It would be too much to expect these practiced liars to admit that the wall was no anti-imperialist fortress but a weapon for killing workers, one they defended for years.

A leaflet they issued in East Germany still implicitly defends the wall: "When the Wall started coming down, the West German stock market went up because Frankfurt bankers are dreaming of bleeding East Germany dry the way they have Poland and Hungary." True, but the way to stop bourgeois bloodsucking is not to re-imprison the masses but to repudiate the imperialist debts — a demand the Spartacists seem to have forgotten. Perhaps that is because they cannot admit that the Stalinists' DDR has been something less than a miracle — a decaying, technologically backward economy beholden to Western banks.

The Spartacists are thoroughly oriented towards the SED, the still-ruling but now post-Stalinist CP. They boast of their daily bulletin in Germany, which nominally calls for a new communist party but really supports a reformed SED: "The consistent break with Stalinism therefore consists in a re-formation of the SED in the spirit of democratic centralism." (December 29.) As if Stalinism's flaw is its lack of Leninist organizational norms! This line means seeking the best proletarian militants among the more democratic Stalinists — instead of among workers who despised and fought the class-collaborators, careerists and criminals.

In their heavy coverage of East Germany, one question is finessed: the Modrow provisional government. It is softly praised for speaking out for "socialism" and criticizing Stalinism, gently criticized for not breaking cleanly enough from the old ways, but never condemned as an enemy of the working class. In accommodating to "left" Stalinists in and around the SED, they ignore the "post-Stalinist" regime's role as the agent for the entry of Western capital. The "means for selling out the DDR" is not just social democracy, as the Spartacists say, but above all the CP.

On Poland they follow the same devious route, blaming Solidarity for the overt capitalist changes while saluting the role of Walesa's partners, Jaruzelski and the Stalinists in the army and police, as bulwarks of the "workers' state." They do not plainly state support for Stalinist officials, but that is just typical centrist vacillation. They are coming ever closer, driven by their appetite to recruit dissident CPers.

The Spartacists claim the banner of the founding German Communist, Karl Liebknecht, but they have forgotten his best-known words: "The main enemy is at home!" Their role in the East today is Menshevik.

Menshevism turns readily from reformism to open counterrevolution. Accordingly, the Spartacists offer little

guidance on whether to join or condemn the mass movements; so far they are hesitantly riding the wave. But they will undoubtedly soon discover that dismantling Stalinism means overthrowing "workers' states" — as they have done more than once before. Then ambiguity will end and they'll be on the opposite side of the class line from the workers, standing with their Stalinist friends and backed by imperialism and social democracy.

#### POPULAR FRONT OR NOT?

The LRCI (ex-MRCI) tendency, normally a very left centrist group, has been caught in confusion by the rush of revolutions. The breakdown of the Berlin Wall led to an unbelievable position: arguing for defending the "integrity of the German nation." (*Workers Power/Britain*, November 1989; *Class Struggle/Ireland*, November/December 1989.)

This is an amazing accommodation to the nationalism of an imperialist power. One can agree or disagree on the importance of revolutionary unification. But to use the ultra-nationalists' own formula implies not just the union of West and East Germany but of all members of the "German nation" throughout East Europe plus the "lost territories" of Poland.

The atrocious formulation also has racist meanings. German-speaking Jews outside of the two Germanies are not considered part of the "German nation"; nor, even more crucially, are workers of Turkish descent born and living in West Germany. Of course, LRCI is by no means racist, but in its effort to undercut the nationalists it has made an ill-considered adaptation to nationalism itself.

LRCI shows particular disorientation over the new Polish government. Its British paper argued that parliamentary Solidarity is not a social-democratic but a Christian democratic party (October 1989). Given LRCI's perennial electoral support for British Labour and the French Socialists, and its belief that Stalinist as well as reformist parties are bourgeois parties in the working class, this should have led Workers Power to urge a vote for the CP and demand that the Stalinists break from their bourgeois allies. It chose not to out of common sense, not any political consistency.

Meanwhile LRCI's French section compared Walesa to the French CP chief of the 1930s, Maurice Thorez, who in the 1936 strike wave had told the workers, "It is necessary to know how to end a strike." (*Pouvoir Ouvrière*, Autumn 1989.) The comparison is apt and shows the class affinity between Thorez and Walesa which Workers Power denies.

LRCI's international coordination obviously needs work. More importantly, its "degenerate workers' state" theory has proved to be a Möbius strip rather than a roadmap clarifying complex events.

#### THE ROMANIAN CIVIL WAR

The real test of any theory of state power comes during civil wars. Romania presents a problem for all "defensists," those who in any way regard the Stalinist states as progressive because of their statified property forms. The dilemma is especially acute for subjective Marxists who take theories and their consequences seriously. If one form of property is progressive over another, it has to be defended, at gunpoint if necessary, when the two are in conflict in a key historical conjuncture.

In Romania, Ceausescu's secret police, the Securitate, took up arms against the soldiers who had gone over to the side of the heroic popular revolution. This was a civil war.

On one side stood the masses under the leadership of liberals who removed the word "socialist" from the country's name and welcomed Western-style economic changes. On the other side were the defenders of state property, ultra-deformed though it was under the Ceausescu family's rule.

Consistent defensists must side with the last-ditch champions of nationalized property in a civil war where they believe the question of property is at issue. In the case of Romania, however, we expect that most will side with the masses — for obvious and understandable reasons: they oppose mass murder, defend the working class and support popular movements. Some find choosing this side easy, since they adapt to the masses' petty-bourgeois misleaders. For those that reject such capitulation, their theory conflicts with their political instinct. Elementary honesty demands that they change one or the other.

Some may reply that they are under no obligation to defend the Securitate gunmen since Stalinism ultimately undermines state property. So it does, but in that case why ever defend a Stalinist-run state, even against outright imperialism? The threat to Stalinist state property in Romania in this conjuncture is much greater than it has been anywhere in Europe in forty years. If defensism ever meant anything, this is the time.

It may also be argued that the place for Marxists is with the masses even when they are wrong; there we can try to persuade them of the need to retain state property while fighting alongside them against the Stalinist butchers. Such a united front is an excellent tactic when the masses are marching in the right direction under treacherous leaders or with mistaken conceptions. But when all this is true *and* they are headed the wrong way — carrying out the counter-revolution, dismantling a "workers' state" (according to defensist theory) — then the only persuasion is with guns.

### UNCONSCIOUS REVOLUTIONISTS?

Another reply might be that the Securitate thugs were not defending the "workers' state" since they issued no socialist or class-oriented declarations or manifestos. We grant that they didn't, although it is not beyond the capacity of some Stalinists to wage demagogic ideological warfare. But then, in the 1940s when the Stalinists originally seized power and crushed the workers' nascent mobilizations, they also avoided socialist propaganda: they talked of national unity and peaceful compromise with the bourgeoisie, not revolution. They even called their new states "people's democracies"; it was only the Trotskyists who (some years later) thought to label them "deformed workers' states." That is, according to "orthodox Trotskyism," the Stalinists once made social revolutions without saying, or even being conscious of, what they were doing. And if that was possible in 1945, why not today?

Of course, we are not really proposing that leftists take sides with Stalinism. We are merely demonstrating the deadly consequences of the pseudo-Marxist idea of "deformed workers' states" born in defeated proletarian revolutions and resting on the backs of exploited and imprisoned workers. There are few conjunctures in history when a theory is so decisively put to the test and found wanting.

There is no place in Marxism for lawyerly excuses, especially not at a moment of violent revolution or counter-revolution. As defensists are fond of saying, there are times when the "Russian question" (the nature of the Stalinist states) is posed point blank. The Romanian civil war was

such a time. Choose your side and take the consequences.

### THEORETICAL CHALLENGES

The critical historical conjuncture puts every would-be Marxist theory to the test. For the deformed workers' state theory, it is not just the Romanian civil war that challenges its proponents. There is an even more fundamental question: since the introduction of private property is in the air, and since the predominance of state property is their key criteria for the existence of a workers' state, when do they admit that their workers' states no longer exist?

The post-World War II Trotskyist defensists' criteria for a workers' state were central planning and the state monopoly of foreign trade — plus, of course, state property in the means of production. Of these, the first two have been abandoned almost across the board in East Europe, while state property remains as an increasingly hollow form without a shred of proletarian content.

More recently, some have stressed criteria like independence from Western imperialism, others the subordination of the expanding private property to the state. But these are imprecise; how does one tell whether "subordination" or "domination" has occurred when they are undergoing a process of change? And Yugoslavia has been strangled by the world market for years; why is it still a workers' state?

We really do not expect our orthodoxist rationalizers to be able to offer any criteria. After all, their ancestors in the 1940s did not recognize the "social revolutions" that created "workers' states" until years after the alleged fact. And without criteria they fall all over each other trying to decide what is or isn't a workers' state. Ethiopia? South Yemen? Angola? Burma? Mozambique? Cambodia under Pol Pot? Cambodia today? Why or why not? No one can say. If you can't tell a capitalist from a workers' state, something is very wrong with your world view.

Here is one particular problem. For Marxists a key criterion for the overthrow of a workers' state would be a civil war between the developing ruling class and the proletariat. There was such a war in the Soviet Union in 1936-39; Trotsky called it a "preventive civil war," although he did not recognize its capitalist-restorationist conclusion. In the absence of such a civil war, can today's Trotskyists really speak of the restoration of capitalism? Not without a gross violation of elementary Marxist teachings.

A very different conclusion is warranted. The establishment of open bourgeois relations without a civil war cannot be precluded, if the current rulers, CPers and others, have their way and the Western bosses grease the slide. If this happens, it would establish not that capitalism has magically been restored but that the system has been fundamentally capitalist all along. The very possibility of such a transformation disproves both deformed workers' state theory and its close cousin, Shachtmanite bureaucratic collectivism.

As the masses of the East go through fundamental transformations in their lives, actions and world views, would-be Marxists can do no less. As "The Internationale" proclaimed, the Earth is rising on new foundations. Those who cannot choose the side of the workers against all their enemies and false friends — those who still see salvation in the petty pressures of the market, the benevolence of liberal democrats in today's provisional governments or the dedication of concerned intellectual planners — will find themselves on the wrong side of the barricades.■

## LRP 'Bust-Up' or WSL Cover-Up?

# Trotskyism and South African Solidarity

The working class is on the march around the world. Its mass action gives a tremendous immediacy to the clash of ideas and practice, vital for the re-creation of authentic Trotskyism. We have often said that most of what passes for Trotskyism today has been destroyed, organizationally and politically. Degenerate and deformed shards of a movement once dedicated to the proletariat vie with each other over which pro-capitalist forces to grasp onto.

We engage in sharp polemics with professed Trotskyist groups here and abroad, since political ideas are life and death questions for us and for some of them. But in the shadow of great events there are those whose real-life mission has little relevance. Theirs is the game of petty maneuvering on the left – a little snipe here, a “network” there, now a merger, then a split, round and round again and again – without clarification or principle. They dream that some day an adroit ploy will deliver The Big Franchise.

In that light we contemplate a barbed little “polemic” flung our way by the Workers Socialist League, a U.S. pseudo-Trotskyist group. Their attack concerns work in New York in defense of Moses Mayekiso, a leader of the South African metalworkers’ union (NUMSA) recently exonerated of treason charges. The WSL admonishes us:

**“An important principle of the Trotskyist movement has been workers democracy. This includes the right of the unions to hold labor meetings without being ‘busted up’ because the LRP or any other group disagrees with the politics presented in the meeting. ... Instead of fighting in the trade unions to concretize support for Moses Mayekiso’s defense campaign and at the same time educating U.S. workers about the Workers Charter which was proposed by NUMSA, the LRP sees its main task as attacking the union bureaucracy at meetings supposedly built to defend the South African working class.”** (*Workers Review*, No. 14, dated 1989.)

This sounds pretty damning: wild-eyed thugs from the LRP threaten to bust up whole trade union meetings for petty sectarian ends. Now that the WSL has ridden to the rescue with its little lecture, the labor officials can rest easier knowing that Trotskyist principles are safe and the physical danger to their meetings has been exposed.

Of course, the idea is absurd. The LRP is a very small organization and the unions are large. Moreover, every union activist knows that the bureaucrats have ample means to prevent opposition from even being heard at their meetings, let alone busting them up – and often use them. It is doubly absurd because the WSL really knows that the LRP never busted up anybody’s meeting, including those of groups smaller than us.

### WSL DEFENDS BUREAUCRATS’ COVER-UP

But the WSL does offer proof. At the “European Trotskyist Conference” in Rimini, Italy last March, the LRP’s observer, Walter Dahl, said that the LRP would have wanted to bust up a New York rally held in 1988 in Mayekiso’s defense. However unrealistic the possibility of doing such a thing, the LRP seems to stand guilty of violating not just a Trotskyist but an elementary democratic principle.

Well, Comrade Dahl may have said those dreaded words, but context is everything. The truth is that he blew his cork, and everyone at the conference knew what he

meant. He was outraged not just at the union bureaucrats’ distortion of Mayekiso’s political views at the New York meeting, which was only to be expected – but even more at the WSL’s cover-up of that meeting. In its press and at Rimini the WSL warmly praised the bureaucratically run affair and boasted of its own role in preparing it.

### LRP DEFENDS WORKERS CHARTER

Some background. Mayekiso was not only a union and community leader hated by the apartheid regime; he was also an opponent of the bourgeois nationalist African Nationalist Congress. His union had drafted a “Workers



*March 1988 New York Mayekiso rally was pure theater, starring ANC. Lies by labor leaders, ‘legwork’ by WSL. No cover charge.*

Charter” in opposition to the ANC’s Freedom Charter. In *Proletarian Revolution* No. 32 we reported the details and commented as follows:

**“Initially the Stalinists and the ANC sought to block efforts to build the [Mayekiso defense] campaign, but this failed in Britain and elsewhere. Now their strategy is to coopt the campaign in order to bury the implicit counterposition to ANC politics that Mayekiso reflects.**

**“A good example was the March 29 rally for Mayekiso in New York. Organized by Labor Against Apartheid, which lists many of the major labor bureaucrats in New York among its sponsors, the rally was dominated by the ANC and its liberal reformist supporters ... . The real Mayekiso was hidden under mounds of pro-ANC rhetoric. None of the banners around the hall even mentioned him, and the main banner over the podium, ‘Hands off COSATU,’ carried the slogan advanced in Britain by ANC supporters to oppose a separate campaign to free Mayekiso.”**

The falsification of what Mayekiso and NUMSA stood for was so thorough that the LRP, at the end of the meeting, stood in the rear of the hall holding up placards containing NUMSA’s Principles of the Workers Charter. We did not bust up the meeting, but we angrily and forcefully took advantage of the modicum of union democracy avail-

able to present some of the truth.

In fact, the WSL knows this. In their new article already quoted, they agree that the New York rally "turned into a cheering session for the ANC and Mandela." As well, "the politics of Mayekiso were completely absent." So why should Dahl have been so upset?

The reason was that the WSL's line at the time was very different from what they say now. In No. 11 of their journal they ran an entire article, "NY Rally for Moses Mayekiso," which had not one word of criticism of the rally's politics or its distortion of Mayekiso's. They reproached the bureaucrats only for not doing more to build the affair — and took credit themselves for much of the "legwork."

That article reflected the WSL's attitude during the campaign. We, the WSL and others had met previously as the New York Committee to Free Moses Mayekiso, but the WSL refused to engage in any activity until the bureaucracy was ready to move. Before the rally, we distributed thousands of leaflets (containing both the rally call and the Workers Charter) and gathered hundreds of names on Free Mayekiso petitions. We invited the WSL to join us, but they preferred working with the bureaucrats.

In the same spirit, when we protested at the March rally, the WSL's man in New York declined to join us, clearly unwilling to annoy his bureaucratic friends. It was not we who failed to "educate U.S. workers about the Workers Charter."

#### RETHINKING OR RE-INVENTING?

That is one reason for the WSL's polemic against us. Their publicly uncritical "legwork" makes them partly responsible for the political flavor of the New York rally, a flavor they now admit was rotten. They were obedient errand boys for the bureaucrats: not only would they not dream of busting up a bureaucratic travesty, they wouldn't even stand up before the audience in protest. Now they want to cover their tracks.

There is a second reason for throwing at us whatever offal was handy. That is the LRP's exposures of the WSL and its siblings' petty maneuverism and debasement of Marxist ideas. One need look no further than the article under discussion for proof. It says:

**"The WSL, which while holding to the 'official' terminology of the 'degenerated' workers state, feels that workers control over the distribution of products is as essential to a 'workers' state' as is ownership of the means of production, and we question whether a system in which any control of the workers is so glaringly absent should be called a 'workers state' with or without clarifying adjectives."**

There's nothing wrong with a group rethinking a question on which it has been so glaringly wrong for years. It is wrong to argue that the class nature of a state hinges on distribution as much as production. That, however, is par for the course; the desecration of Marxism in the name of Marxism is a disease of our times. But to stick to a position which you think is false just because it's "official" is an open assertion that political truth is a disposable diaper. The WSL brazenly holds onto a lie so that it can continue to make petty pacts with other pseudo-Trotskyists.

But why this notice of a yes-and-no position? Because the East European workers are knocking the hell out of the "workers' state" theories, and a number of the afflicted groups are gravitating toward the third-system notions made famous by Max Shachtman: Stalinism is a new society, neither capitalist nor proletarian. The WSL is looking for fast change from handy pockets, and like any good pick-pocket it must keep an eye out to see which way the crowd is moving. The British Socialist Organiser group has already taken the Shachtmanite road; others are following, and the WSL smells a trend.

So it officially sticks to its old line to deal with one flock of fellow-centrists, while bad-mouthing the line in order to cozy up to another. We are honored to be instructed in Trotskyist principle by such eminent practitioners.■



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# Namibia

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of American and South African imperialism by means that guns alone could not achieve.

First, the U.N. plan dictated that South Africa's top official in Namibia, Louis Pienaar, would be the sole ruler of Namibia until independence. Thus South Africa ran the elections. Under Pienaar, over 500 incidents of pre-election intimidation of SWAPO supporters were reported.

Second, all SWAPO forces had to be demobilized before the elections. But the South African-trained police force, which contains members of Koevoet (the brutal South African militia in Namibia, infamous for its assassination squads), was simply monitored by the U.N. This colonial force continues to police the country. The current plan is that it will be merged with SWAPO security forces to form the new Namibia's army and police.

As well, the U.N. resolution dictated that an undemocratic two-thirds majority was needed for approving a constitution. This was designed to give SWAPO a leading but not independent role in the "new Namibia." The U.N. plan only thinly conceals South Africa's guaranteed continuing position. No surprise, since the U.N. is an organization of capitalist regimes that operates under the thumb of the dominant imperialist powers.

## SWAPO AND IMPERIALISM

Imperialism finally accepted SWAPO's role chiefly because the masses would never accept a South African puppet government like those previously tried. SWAPO was the only force that could convince the masses to accept the imperialist content of the independence plan. It had already demonstrated its ability to repress its own members. (See the article, "Defend Victims of SWAPO Repression" in this issue.) Like the African Nationalist Congress in South Africa, SWAPO is a petty-bourgeois organization heavily influenced by Stalinist politics and therefore inevitably prepared to compromise with apartheid capitalism.

SWAPO's 57 percent of the vote translated into 41 seats in the 72-seat assembly — a majority but less than the decisive two-thirds. This meant that SWAPO would have to deal with the South African-sponsored right-wing parties in writing the constitution. It was a setback for SWAPO, which had once predicted it could win 90 percent of the vote. Many observers said that the chief reason for this relatively poor showing was the news of SWAPO's atrocities against its fighters imprisoned abroad.

SWAPO's main opponent was the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), a South African-backed front based on the tribal system which had comprised a phony Namibian government from 1978 to 1983; the DTA came in second with 29 percent, or 21 seats. Four seats went to the United Democratic Front, composed mainly of survivors of SWAPO concentration camps and their supporters.

## A BOURGEOIS CONSTITUTION

Since its electoral victory SWAPO has been overeager to conciliate the forces to its right. At the first assembly session, SWAPO President Sam Nujoma (the likely presi-

dent of independent Namibia) set the capitulatory mood: "I would like to thank the Administrator General [Pienaar] for wonderful cooperation given to my organization" he said. "SWAPO wishes him a wonderful stay and promises him cooperation." (*New York Times*, November 22.)

A month after the assembly met, it reached tentative agreement on a constitution. According to the *Times* (December 21), "The chairman of the assembly, Hage Geingob of SWAPO, praised members for their impartiality and professionalism in drafting the constitution. Leaders of rival parties echoed Mr. Geingob's statement." That a constitution could be so quickly drafted and unanimously agreed



Namibian mineworkers. SWAPO's 'No Expropriations' line betrays miners to South African and Western owners.

upon by forces which had been battlefield enemies for over twenty years leaves little doubt that a sellout deal has been made at the expense of the masses of the Namibian people.

While details have not been disclosed, the draft constitution is clearly bourgeois. It calls for freedom of movement, speech and press and establishes a multi-party democracy, regular elections for two houses of parliament, an executive president and an independent judiciary. This sounds super-democratic, but in fact it means that elections will be dominated by the bourgeois forces that can pay for campaigns, and the country will be ruled on a daily basis by bureaucrats and judges not accountable to the mass of the people. Genuine freedom of the press, for example, requires ending the capitalist monopoly and giving access to all workers', peasants', community, women's and youth organizations. As it stands, these groups have no guaranteed say, while the bicameral parliament could give the 7 percent white minority a near-veto.

All these provisions were prescribed under the U.N. plan dictated by the imperialist powers. In addition, a provision against "arbitrary deprivation of private property without just compensation" was reportedly to be included. The draft was drawn up by South African specialists; it now gets taken to South Africa for "advice" on the final version.

SWAPO's appeasing stance cannot be blamed simply on the imperialist fraud that denied it a working majority, although fraud certainly occurred. Its policy was well

advanced before the voting. Upon acceptance of the ceasefire last August, Nujoma had said, "I believe that the South African Government is genuine — that this time they will be honest people." (*Times*, August 19.) Theo-Ben Gurirab, a long-time SWAPO leader, expressed the same attitude: "If someone is going to cease to be Saul and become Paul, he should be given the opportunity." Nujoma went out of his way to promise South Africa that he would not permit ANC guerrilla bases on Namibian territory: "We are not fighting to liberate ourselves to have other people's bases in our country." (*Times*, August 19.)

### SOCIALIST TALK DROPPED

SWAPO had dropped its former socialist rhetoric in favor of "practical" talk. In the period leading to the November elections, Nujoma toured the country preaching "national reconciliation," pledging no nationalization of businesses unless "a future National Assembly decides to nationalize one or two enterprises with adequate compensation" and only limited steps toward land reform.

In this spirit, SWAPO's new-found trust in the people's oppressors extended to Jannie De Wet, a leading Afrikaner landowner who ran the apartheid government in Namibia for eight years and did more than anyone to try to impose South Africa's hated tribal "homeland" structure on Namibia. SWAPO reportedly first made overtures to De Wet in the summer of 1988. Now he is the leader of the Action Christian National Party (to the right of the DTA) and has been offered a leading post, the agriculture ministry. (*London Observer*, November 5.) He would oversee the distribution of farmland and be able to ensure that the ex-colonialists kept their major holdings.

From a purely capitalist perspective, Nujoma's policy makes perfect sense. Independent Namibia is in an economic stranglehold. Imperialist domination created a backward economy wholly dependent on outside investment, chiefly South African. Minerals and lightly processed commodities are produced for export, while 85 percent of consumer goods, including food, are imported. The mining industry constitutes about 25 percent of the national product, with the South African Anglo American Corporation dominant. There is virtually no manufacturing.

Three-fifths of the Namibian population lives by subsistence farming. Commercial farms are owned and run by a small minority of whites in the rich ranching and crop-growing areas, while the mass of black Namibians live in the impoverished bantustans, providing near-slave labor for the mines, big farms and other industries. The already shaky economy was weakened by a flight of capital and skilled whites in the past year. On top of this, South Africa announced a 73 percent cut in aid to Namibia's administration and the end of bank underwriting of loans. Finally there is the massive external debt incurred by South Africa to finance its occupation.

### SOUTH AFRICAN STRANGLEHOLD

Virtually all of Namibia's economic infrastructure — banking, currency, consumer goods, transportation, customs, external trade — is tied to South Africa. Expressing the position of the leadership, a SWAPO supporter stated, "We are going to have to be coldly realistic in the way we deal with South Africa for many years." SWAPO has already

announced that it will not be able to fulfill its purported aim of withdrawing from the South Africa-run Customs Union and the rand monetary area. These are the imperialists' conditions for Namibian access to the South African capital markets and to international credits.

A glaring injustice is that the country's only deep-sea port and main railroad terminal, Walvis Bay, remains an enclave in South African hands. It is strategic to Namibia economically and militarily; its status will supposedly be resolved after independence, but South Africa has no intention of giving it up. Retention of Walvis Bay guarantees South Africa control of Namibia's exports (and its fishing industry, already depleted by severe overfishing). It also



Johannesburg, October: 150,000 march against apartheid under 'Down with Capitalism, Forward to Workers' Power' banner. Many workers are hostile to ANC-SWAPO retreats.

denies other Central African nations an alternative to their trade dependence on South African ports. Although SWAPO had always declared that "to us the question of Walvis Bay is not negotiable and cannot be compromised," in reality the compromise has been made.

### BEHIND THE SELLOUT

SWAPO's allegiance to a "mixed economy" and business as usual in Namibia won't extinguish mass expectations for reforms in education, health care, and other basic needs — especially after the vast influx of refugees back into Namibia. With South Africa cutting its budget support and the U.N. withdrawing its aid to SWAPO, new funds from imperialism will be the lifeblood of the future regime. As a West European diplomat observed: "If SWAPO doesn't behave itself, there simply won't be any more money."

SWAPO's backtracking on the nationalist as well as the

socialistic promises of its program was predictable. In the face of an economic plague, the logic of any nationalist leadership in Namibia would inevitably lead to conciliation with South African and Western imperialism. SWAPO's leadership is dependent on its base of mass support and would have preferred a more generous deal allowing for substantial reforms. But given the option of leadership in a neo-colonialist regime, it accepted.

The fact that the settlement was a pro-imperialist deal explains why the U.S. was an enthusiastic broker. The Soviet Union has long held the main purse strings for the training of SWAPO cadres and was of critical assistance; it is eager to end its financial aid in the "third world" and strike its own deals with the West. Cuba likewise, despite its claims to be the sole remaining bastion of socialist internationalism, joined with Gorbachev's "new thinking" in endorsing a future South Africa/U.S.-dominated Namibia.

As for South Africa, its military defeat at Cuito Cuavale at the hands of Cuban and Angolan troops in early 1988 helped convince it to settle. As well, its crisis-ridden economy was threatened by the costs of its wars in Angola and Namibia. In the deal, Angola as well as SWAPO pledged not to allow the ANC to use military bases on their territory. And the U.S. offered an alternative path to stability.

#### WORKERS ON THE MOVE

The main force propelling all the players in the deal has been working-class struggle. The Namibian movement has been closely tied to the powerful South African working class. A remarkable growth in labor organizing in Namibia has been a direct result of the labor struggle in South Africa. Most important has been the assistance of the National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa.

Despite a history of workers' resistance in Namibia, until recently trade unions had generally been suppressed. SWAPO waged not a workers' struggle but an external guerrilla war coupled with a diplomatic orientation to the U.N. But starting in 1984, unionization in the mines of Namibia proceeded in defiance of South African policies.

## Revolutionary Strategy for Namibia

While the forces set against them are powerful, the Namibian masses can rely not only on their own strength but on their intimate ties to the powerful South African working class, the key to revolution in the whole region. The borders between South Africa and Namibia are so artificial and the common imperialist enemy is so clear that the growth of a genuine socialist opposition in Namibia could not be an isolated development.

For this reason close attention must be paid to the newly found Workers Revolutionary Party of Namibia, the first legal party in southern Africa calling itself Trotskyist. Consisting mainly of former SWAPO members, the WRP/N was organized in May 1989 and has joined the Preparatory Committee led by the WRP of Great Britain.

#### THE WRP'S ELECTORAL PROGRAM

The rapidity of developments in Namibia demands that internationalists take up the questions facing this movement with haste. In this spirit, we are therefore giving a preliminary analysis of the WRP/N's recent participation in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. (Our knowledge of the Namibian WRP is based largely on the reprints of

Workers' committees came together in November 1986 to form the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN). Shortly thereafter the union launched a massive militant strike against Tsumeb, a U.S., South African and British-owned mining company. Mineworkers demanded a 120 percent increase in pay, an end to the contract labor system and an "unequivocal statement" from Tsumeb against South African rule over Namibia.

In 1987 many other militant strikes occurred, and two unions from the fishing and metal industries joined the MUN to form a federation, the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW). The Public Workers' Union, despite its often conservative membership, also joined the NUNW. NUNW marked the first May Day celebrations in Namibia's history that year.

In 1988 a four-month mass student boycott demanding independence was capped by a two-day general strike, the largest labor action since the 1971-72 general strike. According to the Namibia Communications Center in London, "nearly 100 percent of the black labor force at the country's largest mines and at key industries in the capital, Windhoek - observed the strike." (*Guardian*, August 3, 1988.) No wonder the imperialists rushed to close their agreement so quickly afterwards.

While SWAPO had managed to maintain leadership of the fledgling union movement, its continued growth would inevitably lead to divisions - and the development of an overtly pro-worker counterposition to SWAPO, just as the black workers' struggle in South Africa has led to workers challenging ANC hegemony. (See "South African Workers Debate Socialism," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 33.)

It is clear that given its long history of fighting South Africa and spouting socialist rhetoric, SWAPO retains the loyalty of the masses. Yet SWAPO will call for austerity when in power, and imperialism hopes to more effectively continue its super-exploitation than by the naked fist of South Africa alone. The only alternative is the creation of an authentic communist party in Namibia, a party which would oppose SWAPO's construction of a neo-colonial bourgeois state and lead the fight for socialism.

their material in *Workers Press*, the paper of the WRP/B. We have yet to see the WRP/N's press, *The Worker*, so our discussion is based on only partial information about the group's views and activities.)

The WRP/N campaigned in the recent elections as part of the United Democratic Front, which won roughly 5 percent of the vote. Apart from the WRP, the UDF includes the Patriotic Unity Movement, a group of former SWAPO prisoners, the Damara council and other ethnically-based groups, and the newly founded Labour Party (about which we know nothing).

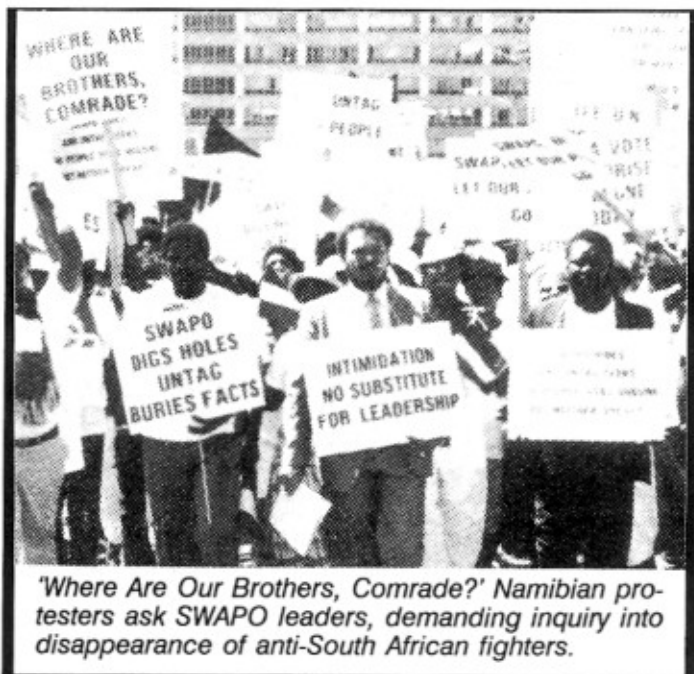
We quote the WRP on why it joined the UDF:

**"This tactical alliance is based on the agreement that the WRP will be allowed to agitate unimpeded for the rights of the urban and rural working classes and land reform, centered on the needs of the expropriated landless peasantry and rural working class. ...**

**"The demagogues and confidence tricksters of Namibian politics coax the Namibian people with many false promises to vote them into power. It is our task to tell them that the imperialists, their front organization the UNO [the United Nations], the South African regime,**

and the capitalists in general seek to protect their ill-begotten property from the Namibian exploited masses and to leave them exploited and oppressed.

"It is the task therefore of the vanguard party, the WRP, to establish progressive alliances in order to take the fight into the Constituent Assembly and expose the imperialists and their agents before the masses. The WRP consequently resolves to beseech the broad masses to vote for the United Democratic Front in pursuit of the broadest democratic goals possible under Resolution 435, and the continuation of the struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the Namibian people under the leadership of the working class." (*Workers*



"Where Are Our Brothers, Comrade?" Namibian protesters ask SWAPO leaders, demanding inquiry into disappearance of anti-South African fighters.

*Press*, October 28.)

In another article the WRP/N declares that, as part of the Fourth International, its goal is to make the socialist revolution:

**"Our aim is the rule of the working class, supported by the peasantry, working towards socialism. The working class in power will decide and control the questions of concessions to capitalist companies, joint ventures, etc. which for a time will be necessary."**

The WRP/N goes on to call for land expropriation, a workers' and peasants' government which guarantees basic freedoms and sovereignty over Walvis Bay. In its conclusion under the heading "The Way Forward," the WRP calls for an electoral campaign by the UDF based on "fundamental" demands. All the demands listed, however, pertain exclusively to the detainee question and the exposure of the crimes of the SWAPO leadership.

#### A WORKERS' OR A BOURGEOIS STATE?

Based on reports in the bourgeois press as well as *Workers Press*, it appears that the UDF, including the WRP, did run a highly agitational electoral campaign — focused on the question of the detainees and an end to SWAPO repression. While we support these demands and the campaign for an inquiry, we are troubled that the electoral campaign was devoted primarily to democratic questions.

Since the purpose of the Namibian election was to

choose an assembly to prepare a constitution for the new state, there could be only one central question for revolutionaries: a bourgeois or a workers' state. To fight for a workers' state, key demands presented as part of the WRP's socialist program (workers' and peasants' councils, land expropriation) should have been at the forefront of their electoral campaign. Such demands would have shown the need for workers' rule and helped counter the consolidation of a bourgeois Namibia.

#### LENINIST APPROACH

Our approach to the Namibian elections comes from an overall Leninist understanding of how communists participate in elections. Our purpose is not to create illusions that elections can bring revolutionary or even "democratic" solutions. Communists must use the vehicle of the bourgeois elections in order to expose the bourgeois parties and the fakery of the elections themselves. Only in its own actions, not elections, can the working class rest its hopes.

Had the WRP/N run on the program of a workers' state, that would have shattered its electoral alliance with the UDF. The other organizations in the UDF did not have a workers' state position; unity could be achieved only by limiting the program to the democratic questions. But revolutionaries cannot endorse delegates who are running simply as "democrats," that is, committed to a bourgeois-democratic constitution, no matter how sincere they may be. It would have been far better to present a clear voice for the proletarian state, even if that voice would be heard by only a small number of workers.

Worse, according to press reports all the parties in the Assembly, presumably including the UDF, agreed on the draft bourgeois constitution. "Despite a hard-fought campaign and major ideological differences, the seven parties represented in the assembly worked out compromises quickly after beginning negotiations Nov. 21." (*New York Times*, December 21.)

#### THE THREAT OF A ONE-PARTY STATE

It appears that the UDF backed the proposed constitution, and there is no evidence that the document is much different than what SWAPO had agreed to in advance. It is clear that a main goal of the UDF campaign was to keep SWAPO from winning the two-thirds majority, not to propose an alternative constitution. Since this aim was fulfilled, the UDF could easily be satisfied with the superficially democratic constitution that emerged.

The WRP/N fully shared this UDF aim. For example, in an article entitled "Namibian Tragedy," it wrote:

**"The killer organization, SWAPO, is guilty of the most terrible crimes against the Namibian people. The arrangements have been made whereby they may win a majority in the elections. This is the result ardently desired and cunningly contrived by a sinister alliance of Soviet Stalinists, world imperialists and the World Council of Churches. They are using the United Nations Organization to achieve their ends."**

**"There is a real danger that SWAPO may be entrusted with the drawing up of the constitution. It is well known that they favor a one-party state. SWAPO alone will rule! There will be no opposition permitted. Criminals and their bosses will be in charge of the state."**

**"The anti-SWAPO working class and democratic forces have the capacity to frustrate a SWAPO victory."** (*Workers Press*, October 28, 1989)

Even though the WRP ran on the UDF slate, no WRP

candidate was elected, and we doubt that the WRP supports the proposed constitution: supporting a bourgeois state would violate their dedication to a socialist program and workers' power. We hope that their understandable fear of SWAPO terror did not lead them to forget the principle of working-class independence and accept a pseudo-democratic constitution, along with the "democratic" pro-bourgeois forces they were allied with.

### IMPERIALIST TENSIONS

It is absolutely true that a SWAPO-only regime would have been dangerously repressive. But a joint regime with the racists, more directly dominated by South Africa, is certainly no better. The WRP/N apparently failed to see that Nujoma's earlier hopes for a one-party state had ended long before the elections; he knew he would have to bow under imperialist pressure. Current imperialist policies dictate pluralist, democratic facades, especially in southern Africa. The imperialists don't trust SWAPO alone to handle the inevitable mass pressure for much greater changes.

Denying these factors means ignoring the tensions that still exist between the U.S., South Africa, and the SWAPO nationalists — despite their deals. They are able to come together at the expense of the masses because they all defend the world capitalist system. Yet they squabble over what degree of independence SWAPO will have, where it will stand on the spectrum between partner and pawn.

The WRP/N often talks of the Namibian deal as a

conspiracy or "sinister alliance" behind SWAPO. This overlooks the root causes in the imperialist system. In seeing the Namibian deal mainly as a plot, the WRP/N denies the very real differences among the players.

As the WRP/N reported, "SWAPO gets open preferential financial treatment in the election campaign from the supposedly neutral [U.N. forces]." Of course; it's been the U.N.-designated heir apparent for years. Yet it is clear both from political understanding and from all reports from Namibia that the imperialists, as well as some Namibian right-wing elements, were working to prevent a two-thirds majority because they want SWAPO's popularity to be dampened. The right-wing parties were getting plenty of help from South Africa.

### REVOLUTIONARIES AND ELECTIONS

Now that SWAPO has been forced into a coalition, the WRP/N's campaign line could seriously mislead the masses. The presence of De Wet or others rightists in the cabinet will be SWAPO's excuse for rejecting mass demands. Revolutionaries must warn that the democratic facade will be used to cover the regime's crackdowns no matter what guarantees are constitutionally adopted.

The WRP/N's electoral alliance is questionable for other reasons. The hegemony of the working class is key to the prospect of socialist revolution, even in an economically backward country where the peasantry is numerically dominant. Certainly an alliance with the peasantry is critical, and WRP/N's demand for land reform is strategic in this regard. However, it is not clear that the UDF represented such an alliance. Given the predominance of democratic demands, it appears that the UDF alliance gave priority to a petty-bourgeois rather than working-class line.

The WRP/N's electoral activity seems to blur two connected but distinct tasks. Our primary task as authentic communists — Trotskyists — is to fight for working-class independence and the workers' vanguard party. We also need to engage in united fronts and alliances committed to specific actions and within which we attempt to demonstrate in practice the necessity for the party and for socialism.

Within a united front, communists must be free to warn against the politics of other participants. In the case of the UDF, we have not seen any criticisms raised by the WRP/N against any of its bloc partners — for example, the Damara Council and other groups which have a negative political history, having participated in the second-tier administrations set up by South Africa.

### COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM

The politics of the revolutionary party can not be subordinated to a temporary alliance. Such an error may be rooted in the WRP/N's view of the relationship between a socialist revolutionary program for Namibia and the nationalist, reformist program. For example, in the article "For Real National Liberation" the WRP/N concluded:

**"The task is to unite in action all working people, in the countryside and in the towns, behind the working class, in the struggle for real democracy, real national independence, and a genuinely representative Constituent Assembly. This is why the WRP is part of the UDF electoral alliance."**

But "real national independence" can not be achieved through nationalism, no matter how genuine or democratic. Nationalists believe that solutions lie within national borders. Their international alliances are tactical blocs based on immediate mutual needs. In contrast, Lenin was willing



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to sacrifice the Russian revolution if that would have aided the German revolution; the latter was decisive from his vantage point, that of the *world* proletariat.

Nationalism is not a stage before internationalism but a counterposed strategy. Witness Nujoma's contemptible refusal to aid South African guerrillas in their fraternal struggle against apartheid. For years nationalists worshipped the liberation regimes in Zambia, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe; they were hailed both as socialist and as bastions against imperialism in general and South Africa in particular. Now they are all neo-colonialist states desperately seeking tighter subordination to imperialism.

With its "practical" common-sense acceptance of the nation, nationalism cannot escape the exactions of the world market. The economic collapse of the Soviet bloc, far more

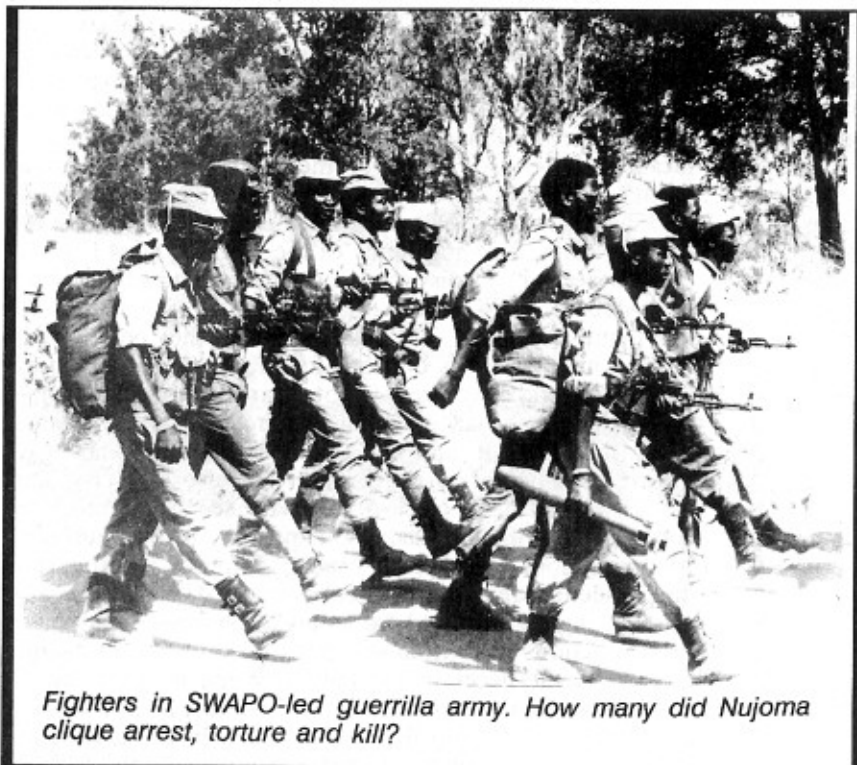
tries. The growth of working-class hostility to the capitulations of the ANC nationalists in South Africa, as well as the creation of the WRP/N in Namibia, testify to the quest for revolutionary consciousness and demonstrate the validity of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

In SWAPO-dominated Namibia, and in an alliance comprised of so many fighters born and bred under nationalist ideology, the distinction between the programs of nationalists and communists must be made crystal clear. Stalinism's socialist rhetoric and revolutionary claims have enabled it to play a role in betraying genuine revolutions in the "third world," a role which has been vital to imperialism. The emphasis on the fight against Stalinism in the WRP/N articles does show its connection to imperialism. But we see no evidence from the material available that the WRP/N has taken up the task of explicitly criticizing nationalism as an ideology. This would have had to include a criticism of nationalist elements within the UDF.

#### ARMS FOR THE MASSES!

In the face of the SWAPO attacks it is correct to block with groups like those in the UDF, but on the basis of action, not electoral pacts. No electoral outcome can defend against armed repression and murder. Electoral campaigns can be used to communicate communist ideas, but they cannot be taken as the solution.

In the Namibian situation, a key united front that has to be built is workers' defense guards against the state and the bosses. Armed self-defense with whatever level of military preparedness is possible must be organized. We are glad to see that the WRP/N has raised such a program, in its "Open Letter to All Those Who Fight to Defeat Imperialism" (*Workers Press*, November 25.) Indeed, the WRP/N does not restrict the need for defense to the SWAPO danger. They warn also against the threat still posed by South African and other right-wing forces in Namibia and the treachery of U.N. "protection."



Fighters in SWAPO-led guerrilla army. How many did Nujoma clique arrest, torture and kill?

developed than any of the African states, proves Trotsky's point that an "independent nation" in this epoch is a reactionary utopian goal. Stalin's "socialism in one country" was impossible; it led to a return to capitalism in a capitalist world. A "socialist" or mixed economy for each African nation in isolation likewise only disguises continued vassalage to imperialism.

Nationalism as an ideology is counterrevolutionary. Its leaders inevitably end up capitulating to imperialism. The masses who fight under a nationalist banner against imperialism, however, are not reactionary but deceived. We engage in united-front actions with nationalists against imperialism often, but we never sacrifice our proletarian program. Revolutionaries use united front actions — for self-determination, for example — in order to break the masses from nationalist misleaderships who will betray their goals.

#### COMMUNISM VS. NATIONALISM

As the world economy worsens for the vast majority, national illusions are crumbling. The blatant failure of one-time third-world heroes from Mao Tsetung to Sekou Touré opens a new day for the masses of the imperialized coun-

#### PROGRAM FOR STRUGGLE

This document contains a list of 17 demands, in effect a transitional program for the developing struggle. The demands on the whole seem excellent — again, judging without full information on the events and the WRP's activity. The document, however, presents the fight against Stalinism as one of the major foundational pillars of the WRP's politics — ahead even of the anti-imperialist struggle. But Stalinism's deadly role is as a comprador of imperialism; it is not an independent, conspiratorial factor.

This young party has begun work under very difficult conditions, faced with a soon-to-be ruling party, SWAPO, that has widespread national and international support for its bourgeois-nationalist aims. The dialogue and debate over a struggle which is vital for us all must continue.

As the WRP/N writes,

"[The imperialists] fear that the 'single spark' of revolutionary working-class struggle in Namibia will start a 'prairie fire' of revolution in South Africa! And that would be the most decisive step forward for the world socialist revolution since October 1917."■

# SWAPO Victims

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offer accounts of torture, beatings, and confinement for months on end in underground pits in SWAPO camps in southern Angola. Of greater concern for many SWAPO supporters was the fact that much of this evidently had little to do with the supposed motivation of rooting out a substantial South African spy-ring in the organization. Interrogation teams were reportedly less interested in facts that in extracting confessions of any sort — many of them clearly untrue." (September 13.)

The attacks on SWAPO militants appear to have been a purge to solidify President Sam Nujoma and his allies' control of the organization — in particular to squash any opposition to the deal currently being cut with the South African regime and international capitalism. The attacks also served to inflame the already divisive tribal atmosphere in Namibia. The vast majority of those accused of spying were from minority groups, while the ruling clique of SWAPO is almost exclusively from the Kwanyamas, the strongest clan of the majority Ovambo people.

## HUNDREDS DEAD OR MISSING

The PCC and the Parents Committee of Namibia have published hundreds of names of murdered and still missing prisoners. SWAPO denies that any prisoners remain but has not accounted for those still missing. The lists we have seen include names of cadres believed to have been victimized by SWAPO before 1984 as well.

A "Report to the Namibian People," subtitled "Historical Account of the SWAPO Spy-Drama" was issued by ex-SWAPO detainees in Angola. Apart from documenting the recent spy-charge scandal, the report outlines prior episodes in SWAPO's history which the PCC believes resulted in the detention and execution of members.

Some campaign representatives have claimed that the number of freedom fighters killed by the SWAPO leadership clique is ten thousand or more; we have seen no basis for such a figure. However, at this time there is no way of determining the actual number of victims. That is one good reason for an inquiry. Another is that the U.N. held a shallow investigation without the participation of SWAPO's accusers. If just one honest fighter was tortured or killed by his or her comrades it demands anger and action.

It is also clear that the figures SWAPO admits are too low and that SWAPO itself has no intention of conducting any type of inquiry into the outrage or of bringing the torturers to justice. One of these, the now infamous Salomon "Jesus" Haula, is deputy head of PLAN, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia.

Theo-Ben Gurirab, a leading SWAPO official, stated that "if SWAPO officials had tortured dissidents, they [the SWAPO leadership] were obligated to bring such officers to justice." (PCC Press Statement, July 20.) SWAPO officials have admitted that "mistakes were made" but have justified the actions by citing war-time conditions. They also minimize the number of victims. SWAPO leaders' apologies, however, are highly suspect; for all their "mistakes," they have produced no proof that any actual spy was captured.

Those who once joined the battalions of fighters against apartheid have the right to have their names cleared of false charges. Others who may still be imprisoned in

Angola, Zambia, or elsewhere cannot be left to rot in prison. Those found guilty of inexcusable crimes against the liberation struggle must be exposed and driven out of the workers' and anti-imperialist movements.

## THE CAMPAIGN ABROAD

Ex-detainees have taken their campaign abroad, primarily to Britain, where they have toured to tell their story. As a result a number of Labour MPs have called for an inquiry by the European Parliament, and supporting motions have been passed by labor and other political bodies demanding an inquiry by the international labor movement. The British Workers Revolutionary Party has been active in the campaign.

In the U.S., so far only the *Guardian* has covered the SWAPO detentions and tortures. Most left organizations —

## Raise Your Voice!

The Political Consultative Council of Ex-SWAPO Detainees has released a statement from its office in Britain which applies as well in the United States. It reads in part:

**"Workers and youth in the trade union and labor movement and campaigners against apartheid give generous support to the struggle of the Namibian people, mainly by donations to SWAPO. The PCC is comprised of people who joined SWAPO to fight apartheid, and we are still committed to that fight. It is for this reason that we place our confidence in you.**

**"We are asking for a people's inquiry into this situation so that the truth can be brought to light. Already voices have been raised in the British labor movement to support our requests, and a committee has been formed to draw attention to our campaign."**

The statement concludes: "We hope you will raise your voice too." It calls for indicating your support both to SWAPO and the PCC. It is signed by Sebastian Kamungu and gives the following address: c/o PO Box 1586, London NW6 6TY, England, U.K.

Stalinist, social democratic and "Trotskyist" alike — continue to tout SWAPO as the saviors of the Namibian masses, despite SWAPO's admitting the substance of the accusations. Instead of such sectarianism a united campaign for an inquiry is needed and should be supported by all defenders of national liberation struggles. We urge readers interested in the campaign to contact the LRP. We will send available back-up literature upon request.

While we support the broad call for a "people's inquiry," we recognize the primary importance of bringing this issue to the workers' movement; the fate of the Namibian brothers and sisters ultimately resides with the working class. The LRP believes that SWAPO's petty-bourgeois politics are linked to its crimes against its own supporters. The success of the Namibian and South African revolutions, and therefore of international socialism as a whole, will be profoundly affected by the struggle to expose the political crimes of such anti-working class forces.■

**For a Working-Class Inquiry!  
Release All SWAPO Prisoners!**

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Winter 1990

## Namibia: New Cloak, Old Yoke

Namibia, the last colony in Africa, took a major step toward independence in November after 75 years of South African occupation. An election for a Constituent Assembly, held under United Nations supervision, was won by SWAPO, the nationalist organization which led the guerrilla struggle against South Africa and has been named by the U.N. as the "sole legitimate representative of the Namibian people." The assembly is expected to reach full agreement on a constitution shortly, with nationhood likely this Spring.

Formal independence for any colonial nation is a victory but does not in itself signify the end of imperialist

domination. In fact all the forces involved in the Namibian plan have made it clear that imperialist hegemony will be preserved.

U.N. Resolution 435, the basis for the whole independence process, was first passed in 1978 and ignored by South Africa for over a decade. Its current implementation results from an American-sponsored cease-fire agreement in the Angolan civil war signed by South Africa, Angola and Cuba in August 1988. A major purpose of the deal was to ensure a compliant Namibia, thus protecting the interests

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*Striking Namibian workers deserve better future than South African neo-colony.*

## Defend Victims of SWAPO Repression!

An international campaign is under way for a "people's inquiry" into the arrest, torture, and murder of hundreds of former SWAPO militants at the hands of SWAPO security forces. The LRP supports this call and is raising the issue in the working-class and left movements of the U.S.

According to the Political Consultative Council (PCC) of ex-SWAPO detainees, in 1984 the SWAPO leadership turned to mass imprisonments, tortures, and killings under the guise of weeding out an alleged "spy ring" within the ranks of those fighting for Namibian liberation. Prisoners included former SWAPO Central Committee members and the founder of the Namibian uranium miners union.

Atrocities committed against young militants whose only crime is to enlist to fight oppression and imperialism are a tragic commonplace. They are especially familiar in southern Africa under the whip of apartheid's slavemasters. But when systematic crimes are carried out in the name of liber-

ation, revolution and socialism, the outrage is appalling.

Especially since the rise of Stalinism, alleged progressives have criminally disgraced the heritage of socialism. And there have always been well-meaning militants who fear that revealing their allies' misdeeds would damage the movement. Cowardly concealment must never prevail again! Every fighter for human liberation must denounce crimes against the struggle and demand an inquiry into such charges.

In 1989 SWAPO released a large number of prisoners, in line with the recent U.N.-sponsored settlement with South Africa. The resulting crisis in the Namibian left was covered in the *Guardian*, the American radical paper, which had previously backed SWAPO uncritically for decades.

"Detainees, many of them former leading SWAPO figures, began returning to Namibia to display scars and

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