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Behind the Black/Jewish Confrontation Racist Offensive Heightens



The fight against racism makes alchemy seem true. Great dreams are daily transformed into nightmares. No one can forget the scenes of the Los Angeles police bashing in the skull of an already bloodied and prone black man. The savagery was unusual only in that it was videotaped and so could not be hidden. Underlying it all is deepening racial oppression against the background of capitalist society in decay.

For blacks in America today, the nightmare of racism is obvious. The frightening problem is that none of the prominent leaderships, whether "integrationist" or "nationalist," offers a way out. There is an alternative, but that requires reorienting the entire struggle.

DREAMS INTO NIGHTMARES

As a result of the gains won in the 1960's, by the early '70's there was real hope for equality and a decent life among blacks. Job opportunities began to open up, at least for

some, thus giving hope to others. The right to a serious education and the chance for a decent income seemed to have been secured. After generations of slavery and then degrading wage-slavery at the bottom of the heap, at last better things seemed possible.

School integration was promoted as the way for black youth to get the same opportunities as middle-class whites. It hasn't happened. A few months ago the Urban League issued its annual *State of Black America*. In it Dr. David Swinton summed up his statistical analysis of today's American condition:

The degree of racial inequality is higher as we begin the 1990's than at any other time in the last 20 years. . . . Both in absolute terms and in comparison to white Americans, Blacks have high unemployment rates, low rates of employment, inferior occupational distribution

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Sex, Lies, Race — and Class

George Bush says that the televised Senate hearings into the charges of sexual harassment brought against Judge Clarence Thomas by Professor Anita Hill were "deeply offensive to American families."

They certainly should have been. The TV marathon was designed to be a lie, enacted to confuse the public, not enlighten. It was itself a deliberate performance of racial and sexual harassment.

A black man, calculatedly used as a political pawn by a white fraternity-type racist president, was shepherded onto the stage by the Great White Patron senator from Missouri to face a Judgment Day panel of Caucasian Elders. A caucus of superannuated segregationists burred his praises as he willingly groveled. "Dixie" played softly in the background.

A black woman was shoved onto center stage. She spelled out a credible story about the nauseating verbal pawing Judge Thomas inflicted upon her. Half the human garbage sitting in judgment sneered that she was a congenital liar, a man-crazy freak, the proverbial temptress who makes men do evil. The other half, her supposed friends, let the travesty go on and on without objection. At the hands of the panel, the nominee and the "deeply offended" Bush, as in so many cases of rape, the victim was turned into the culprit.

Under the floodlights Thomas proved himself as corrupt and cynical as any white politician. He self-righteously denied that his previous writings reflected his own views. He maintained that he had never discussed the crucial abortion issue with anyone. He then expected us to believe his blanket denials about Hill. Lying through his teeth, he fully established his credentials for high office in the Bush pigsty.

To top off the performance was the Happy Ending. A blatantly sexist swine was deemed "the best man" for deciding the Law of the Land. An open enemy of the gains won by blacks, women and all working people was confirmed to High Authority, for life.

But all this, deeply offensive though it was, is not what the President was complaining of. He gave not a damn that the charge of sexual harassment might be true, only whether Thomas could effectively lie his way out. Of course, the Ivy Leaguer who gave us the Willie Horton TV campaign on the low road to the White House didn't worry much about the

hearings' enactment of racism.

No, what might have troubled him was that the sordid spectacle revealed the realities of the American social system. The public watched, fascinated not just by the sex and lies but by the glimpses of power politics no more scrupulous than *Dallas* or *Dynasty*. Disgust with politicians and the political order was evident, not some supposed outrage over sex in the living room.

Moral posturing is Bush's method, moral hypocrisy his soul. Along with Statesmen from both parties, he solemnly bemoaned "the process" — nobody here but us offended-family folks. But when it was over, Bush had little real objection. His nominee won, if barely; Congress, the Democrats above all, looked rotten; and the early polls rolled in, showing popular support for Thomas. The good old American Family had let George Bush off the hook.

The Democrats were highly uncomfortable throughout. Public hearings had been forced on them against their will: they hadn't considered sexual harassment a charge worthy of investigation. The "women activist feminist groups" — Bush's phrase — forced them into the confrontation, once Hill's charges had been leaked. Then came the Democrats' miserable performance, leaving her undefended while the Republicans went at her for hours in a mental gang rape. Women's rights were abandoned to the nobly pro-feminist Ted Kennedy, rendered nearly mute by virtue of his own accomplishments in the field of drunken womanizing.

The feminist leaders had welcomed the hearings because they brought the issue of harassment to public attention. But for them too the process was a mixed blessing. While it showed millions of women who have been sexually abused in the workplace that they have a right to complain, it also suggested that most Americans weren't convinced. As well, the polls showed that women had the same attitude as men.

BEHIND THE SEX AND LIES: POWER

The problem was not "the process" but the system itself. Capitalism operates through power: state power, social power, economic power. But capitalism is unique in the way its power relations have to be disguised. Some people have power — to make or ignore laws, to hire workers or send them into the streets, to subordinate blacks and women. In the U.S., the Supreme Court plays the role of legitimizing the political decisions of the ruling class. Thomas's rise is meant to embody the myth that the Court serves Americans of all races and classes.

Power behind-the-scenes was the dominant issue in the Thomas-Hill confrontation. Significantly, it was understood differently by different groups.

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'Swedish Model' Crumbles

by Alexander Gorowoi, Stockholm

The political situation in Sweden has changed considerably in recent years. The famous "Swedish model" is eroding. The consensus framework for political decision-making, shaped during the many decades of social-democratic predominance, is being radically transformed and threatens to break down altogether. Sweden is becoming more similar to other West European countries. On the surface, this appears as a strengthening of bourgeois reaction, a sharp turn to the right by the entire society. But beneath this surface there are dynamics pointing, potentially, in the opposite direction.

INSTITUTIONALIZED CLASS COLLABORATION

The three cornerstones of the Swedish model have been a strong, stable economy, expansive and quite successful on the world market; a highly organized proletariat (over 90% union members) controlled, with rare exceptions, by the social democracy; and a tight system of institutionalized class collaboration with semi-corporatist traits. Middle-class wage earners are also unionized, albeit to a lesser extent. And

contract interpretation and limiting conflicts within "spheres of vital importance to society." No labor actions at any level were allowed unless contract negotiations had first been subject to mediation by this committee — and that mediation effort failed. And even then a strike or other action could be carried out only after a certain notification procedure had been followed. Actions "causing harm to a third party" not directly involved could be banned by the committee.

This accord complemented a previously established Labor Court, composed of equal numbers of LO and SAF representatives and an "impartial jurist," appointed by the government, as chairman. Its task is to enforce "labor peace," that is, to see that signed contracts are not violated and that hostile actions are not taken if there is a valid contract. Thus workers participating in wildcat strikes face strict fines.

To block any loopholes, the LO congress in 1941 abolished the right of union members to vote on contracts, job actions, etc. It also decided that even local actions had to be decided on at the national level, not by the LO secretariat but by the boards of the national unions. This, as we will see,



Volvo factory in Lima, Peru. Social Democrats everywhere hailed the 'Swedish model.' Workers at home and abroad hate Swedish capitalists and their model corporate imperialism.

there is a network of mass organizations for farmers, retirees, apartment renters, etc., likewise integrated into the system.

The Social Democrats ran the government uninterruptedly from 1932 to 1976 and also since 1982. During this period a great number of deep-going reforms were carried out, and the masses won many gains. This was made possible by the general level of prosperity in the country, along with the important fact that the Swedish working class suffered no decisive defeats since the early 1930's.

The Saltsjöbaden accord, a key component of the Swedish model, was concluded in 1938 and played a central role for nearly fifty years. It regulated the organized collaboration between the national trade union federation, LO, and the employers' association, SAF, through a joint permanent committee for dealing with issues like layoffs, plant closings,

had an important effect in recent years.

In the early years of the postwar boom, another key element was introduced, the "solidaristic wage policy." This meant that nationwide contracts between LO and SAF established standard wages, piecework norms, etc. — at a higher rate than what the free market might determine in small non-competitive enterprises, but lower than what workers could get from the monopolies. Accordingly, under radical slogans like "justice on the job" and "equal pay for equal work," the wage policy helped purge the capital market, increase the concentration and monopolization of capital, and — last but not least — discipline the working class. Of course, the relative levelling of working and living conditions that resulted was an advantage for a huge part of the proletariat and therefore won much support. But it was still a gain that

strengthened Swedish imperialism.

Lastly, following the miners' strike of 1969-70, when there was a revival of working-class militancy after over three decades of sporadically interrupted calm, the government pushed through some new laws. The most important was the Law on Participation in Decision-Making, which aims to tie up the low-level local union bureaucrats: it makes them co-responsible for decisions taken by the board of managers. This law was enacted to counter the weight of shop-floor pressures on the local bureaucrats. The new law also forced local unions to work actively against illegal and spontaneous actions by workers — wildcats, slowdowns, etc.

AFTER THE POSTWAR BOOM

Since the early 1970's, capitalism everywhere has restricted the possibilities of improving the masses' welfare and well-being. Sweden has been no exception. With the basis for capital accumulation shrinking, there is a strong push for more "classical" market solutions, in order to increase exploitation and draw in spheres that have up to now been outside profit accountability — the public and publicly subsidized sectors.

In this new situation, the class-collaborationist institutions and policies of the previous period are no longer sufficient for subordinating the proletariat to the needs of capital. They may become roadblocks, since they are linked to workers' gains which obstruct needed austerity measures. That they are losing much of their capacity to divert working-class demands does not mean, of course, that they are now progressive. Reformism has not become a vehicle for "exceeding the limits of capitalism" or "unconsciously breaking out of the framework of the system," as some pseudo-Trotskyist currents theorize, in reality justifying capitulation to social democracy under a "revolutionary" cloak.

Nevertheless, social democracy will have to sacrifice more and more of its reformist measures for the sake of saving their fundamental content: class collaboration. This will mean weakening the labor bureaucracy, making it worth less to the bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy clings to reformism to maintain its role in capitalist society, but since reformism offers workers less and less, it undermines its own position in the working class. This means that the bourgeoisie will find it difficult to achieve its aims without delivering a harsh blow to the workers — through a fascist or similar onslaught.

What we have seen in Sweden recently is the beginning of this process. As late as the mid-1970's, despite the existing laws, the workers won some concessions, like the abolition of piecework in several industries. When the Social Democrats lost the 1976 elections by a small margin after 44 years in office, the new coalition government of Conservatives, Liberals and a farmers' party continued the traditional policy, trying to meet increasing economic difficulties by Keynesian methods of state spending. When it finally dared to act otherwise, the coalition lost the 1982 elections.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY BACK IN POWER

When the Social Democrats took the reins again, the first thing they did was to carry out a 16% currency devaluation and launch an austerity and privatization offensive. Thus on the level of appearance, social democracy's return to power meant a sharp right turn. But the reality was that social democracy was doing what it always had done, serving the needs of capitalism, under changed conditions. Through their control of LO and the other mass organizations they were still the best people for the job, much better than the openly bourgeois parties, for whom the perspective of a confrontation with the unions was not encouraging.

But this state of affairs did not last long. Along with

Reaganomics in the U.S., Swedish capitalism felt a manifest but hollow recovery in 1983-84. This encouraged expectations by workers that the belt-tightening would now end. Since the government stuck to its austerity program, LO was forced by pressure from below to criticize it publicly (albeit unwillingly and hypocritically) for redistributing wealth from the poor to the rich. Such a thing had never happened before!

The bosses' SAF reacted immediately with a loud offensive "against socialism," that is, against any resistance by labor to the government. They, of course, criticized the government from the right, accusing it of too much hesitation. Two of the bourgeois parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, enjoyed a boost in popular standing, in remarkable contrast with their washed-out appearance while in government a few years before. The SAF tore up the Saltsjöbaden accord as "outdated" and also demanded abandonment of the solidaristic wage policy. The declared goal was to decentralize the contract negotiation process to individual firms so that market competition would discipline the workers.

SAF succeeded in mobilizing huge layers of petty bourgeois for this turn — quite naturally, since such small entrepreneurs had always lost through "solidaristic wages" — along with many middle-class wage-earners who saw a chance to get a better deal for themselves by ending equalization. LO retreated, and a compromise was reached.

RESPONSE FROM THE LEFT

The Euro-Communists, a purely parliamentary party, normally get about 5% of the votes and until recently faithfully supported the social-democratic governments. The more typical "left" always counterposes a syndicalist strategy to the solidaristic wage policy, identifying centralized struggle with capitulation to the union bureaucracy. Since the late 1970's, this left has been in a state of disintegration; what remains has offered no real answers to the new situation. Groups stick to various brands of rank-and-file and simply call for local struggles: workers at each workplace should try to win as much as possible. True, they call for coordination, but these calls are very vague, mere phrase-mongering.

In the fall of 1985, hundreds of thousands of workers signed the "Dala Statement" against cutbacks and austerity; it was circulated by social-democratic union activists discontented with the LO leadership. The various left currents opposed politicizing the movement by challenging the LO leaders to confront the government and SAF. Instead many (notably the Swedish section of the United Secretariat) aligned with some lower-level bureaucrats who played a sectional card under pressure from both workers and employers. Thus they helped mobilize backwardness in the class for a narrow, economic and spontaneist line. When the Dala movement revived in 1987, this informal alliance was able to take the lead — only to put a lid on it and later liquidate it through demobilization and fragmentation along sectional lines.

Meanwhile, the government became increasingly defensive, adopting one demand after another from SAF and the right without any initiative of its own. The Social Democrats dropped their reformist pretensions and legitimized the openly bourgeois, right-wing values which they previously had always condemned. This deepened the polarization between their base and apparatus. Instead of turning their backs on social democracy altogether, many militants regard its right turn as "degeneration" and "treachery" by leaders.

There are even conspiracy theories circulating, like that of the oppositional social-democratic economist Sven Grassman, who insists that Keynesian policies are still possible in Sweden and that the crisis is merely a propaganda bluff launched by the bourgeoisie to turn the clock back to 1932.

So he advocates a return to the "Swedish model" of the solidaristic wage policy, Saltsjöbaden, and the like. Much of the left has taken Grassman's ideas to heart. This illustrates the complete unawareness by the "left" of the deep-going change in the capitalist system, as its decay proceeds further after the end of the postwar boom.

It is a necessary but complicated task for revolutionaries to apply the algebraic method of the Transitional Program. We must stimulate the potentially revolutionary dynamic inherent in the protests of workers who still regard themselves as social democrats (as most do), at the same time avoiding the trap of becoming an opportunist substitute for reformism. Only groping attempts have been made so far, by scattered and small forces, to elaborate and implement such a policy. But the leadership crisis of the working class is becoming more acute.

THE WORKERS LIST

In the fall of 1989, the social-democratic government and party reached an agreement with the Liberal party to radically reform the tax system away from its progressive schedule. This caused an outrage among the ranks of the social-democracy and LO. Soon two nation-wide white-collar strikes broke out, by teachers and bank employees. When the power-

congress in May.

The congress saw a confrontation between two lines. The reformist majority, headed by popular-frontist Maoists, included not only most of the left but also many social democrats who had no distinct line of their own. The minority was a coalition led by "Trotskyists," mainly left-Morenoites and adherents of the International Socialist tendency. They raised a platform which included a number of reforms as well as a digest of transitional demands, formulated to appeal to social democrats. Its proclaimed goal was to turn the Workers List into a "revolutionary united front" through an agreement with reformist but advanced working-class militants.

REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

The justification for this, for the Morenoites, was that the character of the present epoch is one of general and immediately forthcoming revolution. The crisis of revolutionary leadership is brought to a head so profoundly that united-front arrangements broader than a cadre revolutionary party can be the key to the solution; these open a path for the proletarian struggle. This is seen as the only way forward, since the only alternatives are the sectarian gradualism of party-building or the opportunism of swimming with the stream.

For the "revolutionary united front" to survive, the Trot-

Stockholm, May Day 1923. Swedish workers have a long history of powerful organizations.



ful municipal workers planned a strike in February 1990, the government introduced a bill banning strikes and freezing wages. That provoked the most massive working-class protests ever seen against a social-democratic government. The LO leaders, who had first supported the new bill, had to back down and condemn the government. There were mass resignations from the Social Democrats. The government offered to resign, but when the bourgeois parties refused to accept governmental responsibility, it had to retreat, withdrawing the bill and firing the finance minister as a scapegoat.

A new electoral slate, the Workers List, had been founded a few weeks earlier on the initiative of the original leaders of the Dala movement. Their aim seems to have been to get the movement out of its deadlock by politicizing it — in itself a progressive step, although accompanied by many electoralist illusions. During the February upsurge, an opinion poll showed that almost one voter in four would have chosen the Workers List had elections been held then. Most of the left intervened, and as the storm subsided, leftists were able to take hold of key party branches, notably in Stockholm, and thereby secure a strong presence at the first party

ist cadre organization is supposed to dissolve into it. Thus the term "united front" is incorrect, since this organization is supposed to represent a higher stage, a "qualitative leap in party building." Like the pseudo-Trotskyist theorizing cited before, this strategy implies an objectivist notion of class dynamics: since the workers' struggle will "unconsciously" break through the limits of capitalism, the question of revolutionary leadership is mainly organizational. But the workers' struggle will not automatically be unleashed by even the cleverest program with popular appeal. Moreno and his followers tried this method often, disguising themselves as Castroites, Peronists, guerrillaists, etc., as times required, to get the workers' ear. No revolutionary party was ever built by such unprincipled maneuvering.

As for the use of transitional demands. Trotsky's Transitional Program was meant to assist revolutionaries to conduct a joint struggle alongside reformist-minded workers, not to help them appear as more radical social democrats. For example, Trotsky raised the revolutionary demand, "expropriation without compensation," as opposed to the social democrats' "nationalization." A joint struggle for the statification

of industry, yes, but no confusion of goals: his purpose was precisely to change the consciousness of social-democratic workers from reformist to revolutionary. The minority's program, in suggesting that its "transitional" demands could be won under capitalism, was retarding the struggle.

A further question arises. In retrospect it seems clear that the minority, like the majority, accepted the electoralist conceptions of the original Workers List leaders. But it was workers' strikes which had given the Workers List its impetus. Revolutionaries should have concentrated on accelerating the growth in consciousness by helping to expand the action of the class itself. As Lenin pointed out while defending electoral participation from criticisms by ultra-leftists, one good strike was still worth more than passive voting. Communists should have pressed for a general strike against the government's attacks.

Had the workers' upheaval led to a general strike, that would have shown the working class its power and unified the class — above all, it would have joined Swedish workers with immigrant workers at a time when the system is sowing divisions. And such a movement against the government would have politicized workers far more than any electoral campaign. Since the fight for a general strike did not occur, and since workers' action was diverted into electoralist channels, it was no accident that the movement subsided.

CLASS STRUGGLE DECISIVE

Events since the congress show how decisive is the class struggle, seen in a living sense and not as a timeless abstraction. In the situation of February 1990, the slogan (raised by leftists) of "a new socialist party of social-democratic workers" for "the revival of the labor movement," was no rightist deviation. It served an algebraic function, since a worker in revolt but with a subjective social-democratic identity is not at all the same thing as a social democrat whose essence is class collaboration. Consciousness, both as self-conception and as ideas and illusions about the surrounding world, lags well behind action in such situations. If a slogan like the above is used *agitationally*, it reaches the militant worker as an idea not alien to him and also in accord with his practice in struggle. Thus it helps him advance in consciousness. On the other hand, the very same slogan has a completely different meaning in another situation, when it becomes simply a slogan for reconstructing social democracy. It is not algebraic "in itself" but only in a concrete relationship to the struggle.

The same alternatives apply to the Workers List. The decisive question is the relation of strength within the class, among its various layers. Who is pushing whom — the workers or the bureaucrats? The answer decides the difference between a regroupment of workers which makes the bureaucrats their momentary "hostages," and a regroupment of bureaucrats, perhaps in alliance with "left" currents, that pulls the mass of workers along. The same difference exists between a militant movement for a centralized struggle organized under the slogan of a "solidaristic wage policy," and the solidaristic wage policy as it has existed. The former challenges the traditional leadership; the latter spreads illusions in it and demobilizes the class struggle.

After the first congress, when the struggle had already subsided, the Workers List turned into a coalition between low-level labor bureaucrats and "left" currents. This coincided with a reduction in membership and activity. The second party congress, in February 1991, marked a break between the social-democratic workers and the hitherto leading coalition; the former defeated the latter and expelled them from the party. But there was no real change in program, so

it seems to have been more of a reflex action, with anti-communist traits, than a dynamic revival. It did not take place in any class-struggle context, and it did not reverse the party's decline.

With few exceptions, those in the opposition at the first congress gave critical support to the second congress majority, calling its victory a step forward. But given the collapse of the workers' revolt, the question has to be raised whether it was a mistake for revolutionaries and the newly radicalized workers around them to have remained in the Workers List. Entry by revolutionaries into a non-revolutionary party only works if it coincides with the actual movement of working-class layers. Otherwise it becomes a small-group maneuver, leading inevitably to the degeneration of the revolutionaries, not the advance of reformist masses.

Today the question is posed even more sharply. Of course, given the decline, ostensible revolutionaries might be able to seize the leadership, or the ear of the leaders — but of what? In such a "revolutionary united front" they would capture only themselves; the formation would be a mere illusion which could not catch the wave of the next upsurge and become a new independent workers' party.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS OUSTED

The 1991 elections were a disaster for the Social Democrats, who got their lowest vote since 1928. The new bourgeois government hopes to implement an even harsher austerity policy: not only cutting back on welfare here and privatizing there, but dismantling gains on a large scale. While the Workers List got under 4000 votes, a demagogic populist right-wing party, New Democracy, formed only half a year before the vote, won half a million, 7% of the total, many from demoralized workers at the lowest economic rungs.

The New Democracy demands lower taxes and fewer government bureaucrats. It is not directly racist like the French National Front — it does not attack immigrant workers openly. But it does raise demands like dropping aid to third-world countries and increasing aid to East Europe so that refugees don't have to come to Sweden. Thus its program has an anti-immigrant dynamic which would, if continued, lead to racist attacks.

Even so, the working-class support for New Democracy makes the bourgeois victory somewhat Pyrrhic. Since the populists have a program very similar to the Conservatives, it was their outspoken contempt for the establishment politicians that won them votes. Voting for New Democracy was less a vote for something than a vote against the prevailing situation. Otherwise it would have been very hard for the populists to compete with the strong, established and aggressive Conservatives. The Conservatives and Liberals understand this and are quite troubled at having New Democracy in parliament; they refuse to include it in the new right-wing government. If this assessment is correct, New Democracy will not last long, and the bourgeois offensive will meet a hard resistance from the working class, even if it is divided. There are severe and bitter class battles ahead.

It is necessary for revolutionaries to clarify their ideas and to set themselves the task of building the revolutionary party in Sweden, as part of the worldwide struggle for the recreation of the Fourth International. This of course does not preclude interventions into new phenomena like the Workers List if they are a product of workers' struggles. Despite the existence of the Social Democracy, it cannot be excluded that a situation might arise in which the building of an independent labor party becomes decisively important, as in the United States in the 1930's. But such a task cannot replace the need for the revolutionary party. ■

Manifesto of the Marxists of Kurdistan

The document below was written by the Kurdish Communist Movement, founded in January 1990. The KCM is an organizational descendant of the Turkish Popular Liberation Party-Front (THKP-C), founded by the legendary Turkish Guevarist, Mahir Çayan.

When the THKP-C underwent a serious crisis of perspectives in the mid-1970's, it split, and three groups emerged: Devrimci Yol (Revolutionary Path), Dev Sol (Revolutionary Left), and Kurtulus (the Turkey and North Kurdistan Liberation Organization). The first two claimed Çayan's legacy. Kurtulus, the smallest, moved away from guerrillaism.

Kurtulus severely criticized its former comrades, com-

theory, at achieving a two-stage revolution: first bourgeois democracy; only later, after sufficient development, comes socialism.

They endorsed the strategy of permanent revolution and understood that working-class political power meant a revolution actually led by the workers, not some middle-class overlord substituting for the proletariat. The KCM resulting from this split is the only Kurdish organization with such a proletarian program. It publishes a journal in Turkish, *Kürdistanli Marksist*.

It is unfortunate, in our view, that the KCM, does not assert itself as Trotskyist. This is due at least in part to their disgust with the political record of the major self-styled Trotskyist groups.



Silopi, Turkey, Oct. 18. Plainclothes cops and soldiers shot and beat Kurds after rally denouncing government oppression.

paring the THKP-C to the 19th-century Russian Narodniks and comparable Kemalist organizations in Turkey. It objected to the idea of "people's war," denounced the Soviet Communist Party as "revisionist" and denied that the USSR was socialist. It firmly rejected Maoism and all "adventurist" forms of struggle.

Kurtulus and the PKK (the guerrillaist Kurdistan Workers Party) became staunch rivals, and violent clashes began to occur between their supporters. In Turkey from 1978 to 1980, the PKK was more concerned with fighting the Turkish left than the Turkish state. The conflict spilled over to the exiled Turkish and Kurdish left in Western Europe.

Kurtulus founded in the late 1970's, and the Têkosîn (Struggle) group emerged from the ruins. Têkosîn actively promoted united action among the various Kurdish organizations. It led the guerrilla warfare against the Turkish military dictatorship until 1983.

Têkosîn split in 1984. Those leaving, led by General Secretary Seyfi Cengiz, criticized its nationalist and Stalinist tendencies and sought to break from this tradition. They renounced the guerrillaist strategy of "prolonged people's war" and the policy of building a cross-class front with the Kurdish bourgeoisie. This was aimed, according to Stalinist

Manifesto of the Marxists of Kurdistan

I.

Kurdistan is a country integrated into the world capitalist system. Kurdistan has given rise to a revolutionary class, a proletariat. The recent history of Kurdistan has witnessed the struggles of this class. Today, the power and revolutionary potential of this class is even greater. The Kurdistan Communist Movement takes its strength from this phenomenon.

The struggle of the working class has, by nature, an international character. The working class struggle in Kurdistan is part of one and the same universal struggle.

The ultimate aim of class conscious workers in Kurdistan is the same as in all countries: to put an end to private property and to the division of society into classes and create a communist society by means of a proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The final liberation of the proletariat is possible only through the united action of workers of all countries, through a world revolution.

The proletariat of every country must first win the leadership of its own nation, must capture political power in its own country. The struggle of the proletariat of Kurdistan can

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be regarded as a national struggle only in this sense and only formally.

The task of communists in Kurdistan is to unify the struggle of the proletariat of Kurdistan with socialism and the political struggle; and to organize and lead this struggle.

In Turkey and in Kurdistan the immediate political aim of the working class is the same: the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the capture of political power through the joint struggle of the working classes of Turkey and Kurdistan, and the creation of a unified proletarian power.

The two immediate problems of the unified revolution are the national question and the peasant question. Both the general interests of the social development of Kurdistan and, more specifically, the interests of the proletarian struggle require, primarily, the dismantling of the colonial regime and of the feudal and tribal structures. Therefore, in the specific case of Kurdistan, the immediate political tasks of the unified revolution will be national-democratic (bourgeois democratic) only in terms of its immediate political tasks.

The fundamental problem of every revolution is the problem of political power. If the revolution in Kurdistan takes place under the hegemony of the proletariat supported by the peasantry, or leads to the creation of a workers-peasants government dominated by the proletariat, the revolution will force through the limits of the bourgeois-capitalist framework and, gradually turning into a socialist revolution, will assume the character of a permanent revolution. It is also possible that developments may emerge which make a second struggle/revolution necessary.

The specific development of the revolution in Kurdistan will be determined by the proletariat's consciousness, its ability to lead the national-democratic forces and its level of organization.

The Kurdistan Communist Movement will struggle to ensure that the country's political destiny is determined by the proletariat. The Communist Movement will do all within its power to strengthen this alternative. One of the necessary preconditions for this is that the proletariat of Kurdistan steps onto the stage of history as an independent, organized force separate from the property-owning classes of Kurdistan.

In order to establish its hegemony in Kurdistan, the working class of Kurdistan must forge a strong unity at all levels — including organizational unity — with the proletariat of Turkey, and must strengthen and consolidate the unity that already exists. The immediate and ultimate common interests of the working classes of Kurdistan and Turkey make it necessary that they wage a common struggle against economic and political oppression.

A common struggle must also be waged against national oppression, which is a form of political oppression. Both sections of the proletariat have a common interest in this struggle. The unity of the proletariat of the two countries lies in waging a common struggle against national oppression.

The peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie currently make up a majority of the population of Kurdistan. The proletariat is still a small minority in Kurdistan. However, the history of revolutionary experiences in all countries shows that the proletariat is able to play a political role well beyond its numerical strength. If the proletariat of Kurdistan unites its forces, organizes well, and if class conscious workers of Kurdistan come together around the Communist Movement, the course of the history in Kurdistan can be changed as the course of a river is changed.

The proletariat can become the leader of the peoples of Kurdistan if it can lead the democratic liberation of the peasantry, which constitutes an overwhelming majority of the population. In this sense the destiny of the revolution in

Kurdistan will depend on which force wins the support of the peasantry.

History has assigned to the proletariat of Kurdistan a key political role, poised as it is between the proletariat of Turkey and the peasantry of Kurdistan, between East and West.

The proletariat of Kurdistan is a part not only of Kurdish society, but also of the proletariat of Turkey and the world. The Communist Movement strongly underlines this fact and considers it an important task to connect the workers' struggle in Kurdistan with workers' struggles in Turkey and the world, around common international interests and tasks. The Communist Movement considers it a requirement of proletarian internationalism to give priority, at every point in the struggle, not to the working class's narrow national interests, but to its general, universal, common interests.

The Communist Movement will defend the working class's daily interests and will fight for its immediate economic and political demands. However, at every stage of the workers' struggle, we bring to the fore the workers' long-term interests and relate the current movement to the ultimate goal. In short, the Communist Movement will, at every stage, represent the future of the struggle within the current struggle.

II.

The Communist Movement considers the problems of the socialist movement in Turkey and in the world to be its own problems, and takes sides on issues which divide the international socialist movement.

The Communist Movement defends the principle that "the emancipation of the working class will be the act of the working class," and opposes substitutionist and spontaneist interpretations of this principle.

The Communist Movement considers it to be the common task of communists of all nations to contribute to the organization of a worldwide Marxist workers' international.

The Communist Movement does not believe that there is today a socialist part of the world. The Communist Movement believes that the final victory of socialism within the border of individual countries is impossible. Political power is not in the hands of the proletariat in any of the countries described as the "Socialist Bloc", and it is not possible to define these countries as workers' states of any kind.

The Communist Movement opposes the economic interpretation of socialism and believes that socialism must, above all and necessarily, mean the class dictatorship of the proletariat, that this dictatorship can only be exercised through Soviets/workers' councils, and that it must take the form of a direct and full democracy.

The "Socialist Bloc" countries where national oppression and privileges are rife cannot be seen as socialist. Socialism is a full and boundless democracy. There can be no socialism which does not recognize the full equality of nations, including the right to secede.

III.

1. General Political Demands

The Communist Movement believes that the common program of the communists of Turkey and Kurdistan must include the following demands.

- A soviet republic and proletarian dictatorship.
- The formation of an armed workers and peasants militia.
- All public officials must be elected and recallable; they must not be paid above the average wage.
- Full equality of all nations and languages. The right of all nations to self-determination.

- The socialization under workers' control of banks, mines, foreign trade, transport, large enterprises, power plants, etc.
- Freedom of thought, belief, speech, press, meeting, demonstration, communication, travel and settlement, etc., to all regardless of race, sex, religious belief, color, language, etc.
- An end to the oppression of the Alawite minority and the granting of their rightful and legitimate demands.
- A fully democratic and truly secular regime.
- The unlimited right to unionize, strike and organize.
- The resolution of the problem of the unemployment.
- Equal pay for equal work.
- An end to the current situation where one sex enjoys domination and privileges over the other: equal rights for the oppressed sex.

2. Program on the National Question

The Communist Movement fights for the right to self-determination of Kurdistan, including the right of the Kurds of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria to unite.

Unless conditions emerge which make the alternative of secession necessary and unavoidable from the point to view of the interests of the proletariat, the Communist Movement will, as a matter of principle, be in favor of the democratic and voluntary unity of the peoples of Turkey and Kurdistan on the basis of the equality of rights.

The territory known as "Kurdistan" includes a clearly defined area where the non-Kurdish Zaza nation constitute a majority of the population. The Communist Movement also

fights for the right to self-determination of the Zaza.

The Communist Movement fights for full democracy as the only means of the peaceful co-existence of different nationalities. Full equality and national rights must be recognized and guaranteed for all non-Kurdish peoples in Kurdistan. There must be no official language, and no language must be given privileged status in a free Kurdistan.

Armenians who wish to return to their historic motherland must be given the right to do so with all their democratic rights secured.

3. Agrarian Program

All land and means of production belonging to aghas, tribal chiefs and sheikhs will be appropriated and transferred to the control of revolutionary peasants' organizations. An end will be put to the payment of tribute and taxes by the peasantry to landlords and sheikhs; such feudal and semi-feudal forms of exploitation and dependence as forced labor, share-cropping and renting will be abolished. Usury will be abolished; poor and middle peasants' debts to usurers and banks will be written off, as will mortgages. As a means of facilitating the transition from private to collective ownership on land, the organization of small peasants in co-operatives — particularly production co-operatives — will be promoted. Large capitalist landholdings, land owned by the state and by religious foundations will be socialized under the control of agricultural workers.

February 12, 1990

South Africa: ANC Capitulations Deepen

Observing the tragedy of South African township violence, the editor of the black newspaper *The Sowetan* lamented, "We cannot cope with victory. . . . White soldiers are now needed to tear us from one another's throats."

This despair is understandable. But the problem is not that the masses have difficulty "coping with victory." Rather they are being led to defeat by their leaders.

For a year and a half, the de Klerk government has promised reforms while financing the bloodbaths carried out by Inkatha killers. Meanwhile, Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress cling to negotiations with the bloody regime while futilely calling on it to disarm the fascist Inkatha.

In the past year alone, over a thousand lives have been lost to government-orchestrated violence. But while Mandela and the ANC have complained about the regime, they have done virtually nothing to defend even their own supporters from Inkatha's terror. Over a year after the ANC first announced the formation of self-defense units, to be aided by returning combatants of MK, the ANC's military wing, the ANC's July Conference endorsed a resolution to begin implementing the proposal.

Mandela's speech at the July conference made clear the ANC's priorities for an "interim" biracial government: the liberation army would join with the apartheid armed forces.

New challenges will face MK in the context of the installation of the interim government. . . . Where it can, it must, of course, make its expertise available to those communities that are engaged in the process of establishing their self-defense units. At the same time, MK must prepare itself to become part of the new national defense force . . . (*Militant*, Aug. 2.)

The MK conference in August echoed this line, giving "unqualified support" to negotiations. Integrating ANC guerrillas into the South African Defense Forces (SADF) was the

main topic. The conference adopted a resolution calling for "contact with all security forces and armies within South Africa committed to change to a democratic, nonracial, non-sexist South Africa." MK Chief of Staff Chris Hani, supposedly a leading left-winger in the South African Communist Party (SACP) added,

We must remain in our trenches waiting for the next order. But we want to know if there are any of you who want to make a career in a future army because we can prepare you for that role. (*Militant*, Oct. 4.)

Thus it was decided to undertake a recruitment drive for blacks interested in joining this future South African army. For the ANC, defense of the masses today is a side issue: it dreams of ANC and SADF cadres marching hand in hand.

This twisted vision is a result of the major political capitulation that the ANC has made to the regime: the pursuit of negotiations dictates its response to everything. Organizing even a minimal defense of the townships with MK-led units would put the ANC into confrontation with the regime and end the negotiations; a serious defense would require the armed mobilization of the whole black working class.

ANC'S MANDATE: ATTACKS ON WORKING CLASS

If the ANC is to actually strike a deal with the apartheid regime, it will have to show it can crack down on the workers on the economic plane too. To this end, the leadership increasingly relies on the SACP to discipline the ranks in COSATU, the leading union federation, as well as other organizations. As one National Union of Miners (NUM) official stated, "Negotiating retrenchment packages is the Union's biggest activity at the moment." (*South African Labour Bulletin*, June 1991.)

Union leaders are trying to dupe the workers by sugar-coating their capitulations with talk of "co-determination,"



Negotiation meeting between Mandela and de Klerk. They are haggling over the price the masses will pay for the ANC's capitulation.

a formula for phony worker-management plans that keeps the bosses in control while the workers get a "voice" — in their own exploitation. Thus the NUM calls for retrenchments "with a human face," as it negotiates for severance pay and training while accepting layoffs and mine closings. In a classic display of class collaboration, the NUM proposes that closings be handled "in the best possible manner for mine owners, government and mineworkers."

Fittingly, the NUM has also abandoned its demand for nationalization of the mines. This fits with the ANC's abandonment of its own Freedom Charter demand for nationalization of major industries, a radical promise of social and economic justice for the black masses. While only an allusion to socialism, the demand was seen by the bourgeoisie as a threat to its property. But as soon as de Klerk tossed a few reforms their way, the ANC backed off. And with the fall of

Stalinism in Europe and its growing reliance on support from imperialism, the ANC leaders discovered that nationalization is no solution.

Yet more than once in the past the working class in South Africa, through its general strikes and other mass actions, has shaken the South African state to its core. If it weren't for black working-class power in South Africa, Mandela and his allies would have nothing to negotiate.

To fight for their own interests, workers have to break from both the Stalinist and liberal wings of the ANC, and from the reformist trade union leaders. The working class needs to reclaim the leadership of the black struggle. And that struggle has to turn toward revolution to overthrow the capitalist state, whatever reforms it makes in apartheid. Thus working to build the revolutionary party is the main task for revolutionary workers in South Africa today. ■

Ex-ANC/SWAPO Militants Demand Justice

The situation remains ominous for ANC and SWAPO ex-detainees who have been fighting to gather international support for an inquiry into the abuses they suffered abroad. The campaign began in 1989, when former SWAPO militants who had been imprisoned and tortured by the security apparatus of the SWAPO military in exile, started returning to Namibia. SWAPO was celebrating Namibia's formal independence, which really meant the continued enslavement of the Namibian masses to South African capital.

Less than a year later, with the ANC's negotiations mimicking the capitulations of SWAPO, the ANC ex-prisoners started returning to South Africa. They too reported atrocities they had endured in camps run by the corrupt MK security apparatus. (See *Proletarian Revolution* Nos. 36 and 38 for detailed reports.)

Nelson Mandela recently promised seventeen former MK militants, who had been imprisoned as "spies" and who have now agreed to be re-integrated into the ANC, that their cases would be "thoroughly investigated" and that these "genuine comrades" would be "protected" by the

ANC. This promise is an important step forward towards validating the the ex-detainees' campaign.

To our knowledge Mandela's benevolence has not been extended to ex-detainees who do not wish to return to the ANC fold. Militants who demand to be publicly cleared of the spy label, both in Namibia and South Africa, live in fear for their lives. They represent a threat to the SWAPO and ANC liberation myths.

The ex-detainees' call for an inquiry was taken up in Britain by the journal *Searchlight South Africa* and the paper *Workers Press* of the Workers Revolutionary Party. In the U.S., the LRP has been the only organization to support the call. Readers interested in helping publicize the campaign or seeking more information may contact us.

On the other side, the Spartacist League published a scurrilous article denouncing the campaign against the ANC and SWAPO atrocities. (*Workers Vanguard*, Aug. 2.) They also attacked SSA, the WRP and others for publicizing the Winnie Mandela scandal (see *Proletarian Revolution* No. 39.) We will comment in detail in an upcoming issue.

Racism

continued from page 1

and low wages and earnings. Blacks have low incomes and high poverty rates. They own little wealth, and no significant progress is being made to improve the status of Blacks and to close the gaps . . .

As for the benefits of integrated schools, other studies point out that nearly two-thirds of black youth still go to predominantly minority schools, and one-third are in outrightly segregated schools with 90% or more of black students. And open admissions to college, given escalating tuition charges and major cutbacks, doesn't exist in the real world even where it's promised.

Just look at the black ghettos today, the "inner cities": public services that do not serve, schools that do not teach, workers without work. Whole neighborhoods terrorized by crime, crack, cops and filth; streets filled with young people with nothing to do and no hope.

This is not so say that no blacks gained from the years of struggle. A black "middle class" (actually, professionals, lower-rung business people and labor aristocrats) has devel-



New York's Mayor Dinkins prays for Jewish votes at Western Wall, Jerusalem. Black-led united workers' struggle is the answer to his phony 'mosaic.'

oped. A recent study shows that one in seven black families earn \$50,000 a year or more, compared with one in seventeen black families with that income, inflation adjusted, in 1967. The rise was noteworthy even though whites still are far ahead, with one out of three families in the \$50,000 bracket.

As with whites, black professionals and some better-off workers are fleeing the central cities for the suburbs. The ghettos thus lock together the less mobile, less affluent and unemployed workers — along with growing numbers of lumpenproletarians who prey on them. The latter are constantly being created and re-created by capitalism. The ghettos are

awash in rising tension and anxiety.

Foreboding is not limited to the ghettos: it also commutes to the suburbs. The declining economy undermines all the middle strata and adds to the insecurity fostered by racism and reaction. Unemployment is rising, despite George Bush's fatuous assurances that the recession is over; 13.5% of the total population now lives below the conservative official poverty line. Real income fell by 3% in 1990 alone, continuing its long stagnation. In this context, the relative affluence of the black middle class is tenuous at best.

Front-page headlines in the *New York Times* tell it all: "Unions at a Loss to Reverse Falling Fortunes of Workers." "Part-Time Hirings Bring Deep Change in U.S. Workplaces — 40-Hour Week is Eroded — As Companies Reduce Costs, Many Workers Can't Find Full Hours or Benefits."

When even the white working class is getting it in the neck, the disproportionate suffering of black workers accelerates rapidly. Swinton's report concludes:

The consistency of these results for the last decade leads to one inescapable conclusion. The disadvantaged economic status of the African-American population is a permanent feature of the American economy. The permanence of this disadvantage status implies that it is perpetuated by the normal operations of the American economy.

In a word, capitalism is inescapably racist. Not surprisingly, social explosions are occurring in U.S. cities. The wonder is that they haven't been bigger and more violent.

NEW YORK: BLACKS AND JEWS

Street rioting broke out in Crown Heights, a largely black neighborhood of Brooklyn in late August. The trigger was an accident in which a Hasidic Jew, driving in the police-escorted entourage of Lubavitcher Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, ran over two black children and killed one, seven-year-old Gavin Cato. In the riot, a visiting Australian Jew, Yankel Rosenbaum, was stabbed; he died at a city hospital after getting the negligent treatment normally reserved for blacks.

The details of the accident, the differing accounts of what the police and ambulances did are important but not decisive. The incident was a spark which set off the social dynamite built into the conflict between the desperate ghetto and the surrounding society.

Many Jewish leaders denounced the riot as anti-Semitic. Some even labeled it another *Kristallnacht*, the infamous orgy of anti-Jewish rioting, looting and murdering in Nazi Germany in 1938. Reverend Al Sharpton denied the charges of anti-Semitism: "This is a classical example of trying to turn the victim into the victimizer."

But the Crown Heights rioters were anti-Semitic. Chants of "Heil Hitler" and the like have no other meaning. But Sharpton, demagogue though he is, is absolutely right in pointing out that the Jewish leaders treat the oppressed as the oppressors. *Kristallnacht* is a monstrously distorted analogy. In Germany the Nazis were in power; all the brute force of the state was arrayed against the Jewish victims. In Brooklyn the cops beat and arrested dozens of blacks and protected the politically influential Hasidic leaders.

The "Heil Hitlers" did not mean that blacks are Nazis; they were the screams of violently frustrated people. The rioters knew that the Nazis despised blacks as well as Jews. But they also knew that such slogans would deeply hurt their Hasidic antagonists. And the Lubavitchers are a particularly reactionary Jewish religious sect, notoriously insensitive to outsiders — including other Jews, but especially their black neighbors. Racism is rife among them in Crown Heights. Even so, it remains true that general anti-Jewish sentiment

is a factor among blacks.

Denouncing this sentiment, Jewish spokesmen often retort that Jews participated in and helped finance civil rights efforts, and two Jewish youths were killed in the desegregation fight. This argument gets a mixed response, since blacks perceive a patronizing attitude and a demand for power over the movement by Jewish leaders. There are also very real feelings that Jews, who were also oppressed, should be held to their claims of a higher morality. But they do not behave that way in their everyday relations with blacks.

There *are* Jewish bosses who exploit black labor; there are real estate agents and landlords who operate slums. There are middle-class and petty-bourgeois Jews who live nearby and, while hardly wealthy by American bourgeois standards, look down upon impoverished blacks. It is not surprising that the black population is not immune to the anti-Semitism of capitalist society, which invokes the Jews — the “international Jewish banking conspiracy” — as a substitute and scapegoat for the capitalist class as a whole.

Attitudes among blacks toward Jews are actually very mixed. Blacks are also aware of the injustices perpetrated against Jews in the U.S. as well as Europe, as well as of the acts of solidarity to the black struggle by some Jews. A study by the Anti-Defamation League in 1967 found that blacks were the *least* anti-Semitic Christian group in the U.S. and, significantly, that the more “militant” a black person was, the less likely he or she was to be anti-white or anti-Jewish.

However, in the absence of deep class consciousness throughout society, the crimes and insults of local Jewish capitalists, prominent media bosses and official Jewish organizations are far more visible than the efforts of Jewish leftists and workers. The adaptation of most Jews to Zionism — before Hitler a decidedly minority view — and the unmistakable positioning of Israel on the imperialist side of the world divide among nations, have also alienated blacks who solidarize with the oppressed Palestinians.

Moreover, the Jewish bourgeoisie and the increasingly conservative leaders of the Jewish organizations act as if they were now fully established in the U.S. ruling class. As political attacks against blacks mount, they too use code words like “quotas” and “preferential hiring” to keep blacks down. As often as not they are in the forefront of the racist assault.

THE DISCOVERY OF ‘BLACK ANTI-SEMITISM’

The charge of “black anti-Semitism” is of fairly recent vintage. Jewish leaders began pointing to it in the late 1960’s, when the black movement began moving away from legalistic civil rights and charting an independent course. Before that, the “liberal-labor coalition” which led the political drive for civil rights was headed by the labor unions, Northern Democrats, the big Jewish organizations and the mainline white churches. They were the senior partners; black groups like the NAACP, SCLC and CORE were assigned lesser parts.

Under the pressure of the ghetto uprisings that swept inner-city America, “black power” forces grew and the grand alliance segmented. While capitalism could still afford to make concessions to the black revolt in the late 1960’s, signs of the shrinking pie were already evident. The liberal labor and white ethnic leaders looked after their own and were not at all delighted to learn that blacks wanted an equal share.

Ordinary Jews had a mixed consciousness toward blacks. On the one hand, they saw blacks as another persecuted people. On the other, they feared rising crime and urban blight and associated these with blacks, swallowing the pervasive racism of U.S. society. Having mostly moved up into the white-collar working class, they also feared that their precarious acceptance on the edge of mainstream America would be

endangered by the advance of “too many” blacks.

The turning point towards neo-conservatism was the New York teachers’ strike of 1968. Before then the main Jewish organizations had minimized occasional reports of black anti-Semitism, justifiably warning instead against what they called a “Jewish backlash.” Faced with a ruling-class attack against unions, the heads of the largely Jewish teachers’ union chose to lash back against black “community control” leaders rather than confront their bourgeois “friends.” And given the discriminatory practices of most unions, it was no wonder that many blacks were misled into attacks on union rights. The union heads used this to re-channel labor’s response. Albert Shanker & Co. took a handful of ugly anti-Semitic leaflets and broadcast them widely in newspaper ads and articles. Thus “black anti-Semitism” was born.

In accepting this outrageous generalization, the Jewish organizations betrayed their own followers. As the capitalist pie shrinks further, U.S. capitalism will not hesitate to learn from the Nazis and turn mass hatred and rebellion against a familiar scapegoat, the Jews. Jewish leaders toadying to the capitalists and pointing accusingly at blacks will not deflect the far more dangerous and mounting *white* anti-Semitism and will have done little or nothing to fight against it.

It is also true that sections of the black radical leadership discovered the utility of anti-Semitism at the same time. Rebelling against the dominant “integrationist” middle-class leaders, politically impotent junior partners in the liberal coalition, these “nationalists” echoed mass economic demands and claimed a bigger stake. Because of their own class outlook, they denied the class system was the enemy. They directed their outrage against other ethnic groups in order to congeal their “nation” — rather than fight for leadership of the working class that the vast majority of blacks belong to.

Thus both Jewish and black leaders found “black anti-Semitism” a useful weapon in trying to tie their working-class followers to their own narrow programs. They succeeded only partly. Many Jewish workers fear correctly that their “acceptance” in American society will be short-lived; keeping blacks down is no protection. And most blacks know that their problems do not derive from any particular ethnic conspiracy.

PAWNS IN THEIR GAME

All over the world nationalist hatreds seem to be mounting at an unprecedented pace. Blood is spilling in India, South Africa, Yugoslavia, the USSR. Fascists swagger again in not only Germany but also France and Britain. There is method in the madness. World capitalism is on the edge of a new depression. The bourgeoisies cannot afford to buy off the masses they rule over, so their only hope is to divide the exploited and oppressed. Mass anger is turned away from capitalism — imperialism on the world scale — toward other nationalities or races.

This turmoil is not simply a question of national rivalries kindled. Capitalism uses certain peoples as pawns to oppress others. In some countries this is clear: Germans in Germany are set against Turkish, Kurdish, Vietnamese and African “guest workers.” Elsewhere it is less clear but still true, as in Yugoslavia. (See the article in this issue.) In South Africa not only are whites mobilized against blacks, but so are some Zulus used as pawns against other blacks.

The uproar in the U.S. is part of this pattern of capitalist barbarism. In Bensonhurst, scene of a recent racist murder in New York, Italian working-class youth, many of them increasingly hopeless about their futures, are rallied against blacks. In Crown Heights it is the Jews, the most disposable of possible pawns.

The capitalists form a tiny class, dependent upon such

pawns to do their dirty work. Since the pawns are mostly petty bourgeois and workers, they are acting against their own fundamental interests. Thus, with a class-conscious strategy, many of them can be re-directed. It is vital to distinguish between leaders and led, between fascist cadres and frustrated masses. But it is equally crucial to win the misled elements not by any concession to racism but by posing the sharpest alternatives to capitalist oppression.

In the U.S. it is a question not of separate nations but of ethnicity and race. We oppose all forms of bigotry — nation-



David Duke, retired 'grand wizard' of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi leader, now 'respectable' white supremacist and Republican candidate for Louisiana governor. Capitalism turns openly to racism to divide working class, as its stagnating economy threatens more and more workers.

al, racial, ethnic, religious, etc. Wherever whites are set against blacks, revolutionaries of all races side with the blacks against the pawns of capital. Our position is based on the understanding that class is the central, determinant question. We therefore oppose the integrationism of the liberal coalitionists, including the "rainbow" and "gorgeous mosaic" claptrap designed to accommodate workers to their exploiters. We can't all live in peace and harmony while some of "us" are grabbing all of what's left of the economic pie.

"Nationalists" are often conservative and religious, but given the capitulatory nature of liberal integrationism, they often attract far more radical adherents. Their separatism offers no alternative but demagogic attacks against other racial and ethnic groups to bind rebellious masses to opportunism.

BLACK WORKERS MUST LEAD

Al Sharpton said of the Crown Heights rioters: "Nobody controls these kids but these kids do respect us. They don't do what we say but they don't disrespect us; they don't throw bottles at us like they do at . . . Dinkins." (*Village Voice*, Oct. 8.) None of the middle-class leaders control the volatile forces of the black populace. But riots by themselves are not a way out. In the '60's and '70's the ghetto rebellions forced

the capitalists to give in to some demands, to offer palliatives and sops. "Affirmative action" and "preferential hiring" provided only enough for a few to rise, and that only for a while. But there were gains.

No longer. Now capitalism is bent on taking back what it once conceded. Racial riots can only bash some of the pawns (and some innocent people) and at best deal out a little justice to the cops. But they are not strong enough to win gains. As well, they bolster popular support for the rulers' "beef up the police" clamor, a deadly answer to demands for aid made by working people, blacks included.

The time is ripe for the working class to take the lead. The key fact in the U.S. class struggle is that blacks are not simply victims. Black workers are disproportionately employed in the industrial workforce and are critical to the economies of most cities. New York's bourgeoisie, for example, could be stopped cold if the largely black transit, municipal and hospital unions went on strike. And blacks can reach other workers as well. The anger of the exploited, oppressed and unemployed can be mobilized either racially or as a class against their real enemy, capitalism. That is the choice.

Black workers have shown their militancy in the past. In the wildcat strike wave of the early 1970's, white workers for the first time showed their willingness to follow black workers' leadership in strike after strike. But they have so far not taken the leadership of the liberation struggle itself. That has been in the hands of middle-class blacks: liberals and radicals, integrationists and separatists. This must change.

UNITED REVOLUTIONARY PARTY NEEDED

The strategy of battling for crumbs — even for bigger crumbs — has failed. It is time for the alternative, to oppose capitalism as a system. In fact, that is the only way to obtain even crumbs! Black workers, together with Latinos and others who cannot gain equality under capitalism, will demand an end to givebacks, to job losses and factory closures, to cutbacks in public services, to racist inequality and injustice. Jewish workers too need to break with their pro-capitalist leaders and once again become a strong component of the revolutionary movement.

We call on revolutionary workers of all races and nationalities to join with us in the struggle to create a genuine party of the working class. Such an organization would fight in the unions not only for a defensive general strike. It would prove through the general strike that the working class has the power to transform society. The class can then fight for a decent living wage for all, for sharing the necessary work among all available workers so that unemployment disappears, for workers' control of working conditions.

Such demands would mean a frontal attack on the capitalists' prerogative to rule as they see fit. Hence the workers' party must be a revolutionary, authentic communist party. It must say: if capitalism cannot provide what the working class needs, then capitalism will be ended.

Ending capitalism is the major step for abolishing racism as well. The past struggle proves that blacks will never attain job security and wage equality under capitalism. Blacks will always be the last hired and first fired. The revolutionary struggle is therefore doubly important for black workers.

In no way does this mean that black workers, in the interest of leading the whole working class, should subordinate their outrage against racism. Quite the opposite. In the past it was blacks' proven capacity to fight against injustice that won white workers to their side in the class struggle. It is primarily whites who have to learn that racism is self-defeating and only benefits the bosses. ■

The Uproar over Jeffries: A Racist Attack

Professor Leonard Jeffries, head of the Black Studies department at the City College of New York (CCNY), a branch of the City University (CUNY), has been the object of a massive campaign highlighting anti-Semitic remarks in a speech he gave in July. We reprint here, slightly edited for space reasons, a leaflet distributed by the LRP at CCNY explaining the attack. The bulk of the leaflet was also printed as an article in the student newspaper, *The Campus*. Previous LRP interventions on related issues can be seen in our issues No. 37 and 39.

In October, the CUNY Board of Trustees denied Prof. Jeffries the usual three-year term as department chairman by confirming his election for one year only. This act was a capitulation to the racist assault, since none of the criticisms of Dr. Jeffries have anything to do with his conduct as chairman. The one-year "compromise" was obviously meant to postpone a full dismissal to the summer, so as to avoid student protest.

As we go to press, the bourgeois politicians and media are still hounding Jeffries with a sensationalist attention they never gave to the overtly anti-black statements made by CCNY Prof. Michael Levin. The sustained attack confirms the leaflet's point that the real issue is the mounting offensive against blacks as a whole. Unfortunately, at the moment Jeffries' followers insist that his defenders assert "the truth" of everything he says. This demand undermines the possibility of a united defense against racism.

CCNY Professor Leonard Jeffries is charged by the press and politicians with making a bigoted and anti-American speech. But the greater danger of bigotry comes from the other side: those who have seized on the issue to discredit the struggle for justice and equality.

There have been a dozen racist attacks in Canarsie and Staten Island this summer alone. Police death squads continue to swell their toll of Blacks and Latinos. Rampant injustice inflames Crown Heights. Homelessness, crime, drugs torment communities of people of color. About this the politicians do nothing.

On the other hand, you can hear racist filth on radio talk shows in New York every day. Media superstar Pat Buchanan, featured in the Jeffries-baiting *Post*, openly calls for keeping America white. Yet Jeffries' speech, weeks after it was made, draws continued media attention and repeated calls from establishment figures for retribution.

It is no coincidence that Jeffries' chief accusers helped lead the assault last spring on CUNY, a university that serves working-class and minority students. Its budget has been slashed, and skyrocketing tuition has slammed the door shut for many. The *Post*, the *Times* and the financial interests they speak for would happily restrict public higher education to a narrow elite. Governor Cuomo, who equitably cuts taxes for the rich and services for the poor, called for Jeffries to be ousted. Senator D'Amato followed up with threats to slash CUNY's federal funding. Mayor Dinkins, fresh from his across-the-board cutbacks of every public sector except the racist cops, joined the bandwagon.

TRUE U.S. HISTORY

The attack on Dr. Jeffries is also aimed at the "multicultural curriculum." Change in what schools teach is long overdue. In history, for example, everyone should learn that while the U.S. was born through a revolution against oppres-

sion, the result was a *capitalist* society. U.S. expansion was based on genocide of the "Indians," enslavement of Africans, and super-exploitation of waves of European, Asian and Latin American immigrants.

Moreover, the U.S. is now the world's primary *imperialist* power. It is responsible for countless invasions in the Caribbean and Latin America, for a decade of bloody war against Vietnam — and most recently, for the slaughter of thousands of Panamanians and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, an achievement of "CCNY's own" General Colin Powell.

The CCNY Administration that "honored" this war-maker last year now deplores Jeffries in the name of "civility and mutual respect."

Jeffries' speech contained nothing he hasn't said before. His detractors cite it very selectively, in order to leave out justified criticisms of "official" history. But he also preaches pseudo-scientific mysticism, and he continues to denounce Jews as the main oppressors of Blacks.

Yes, Hollywood studios were controlled by Jewish capitalists, and they denigrated Blacks. But it was no conspiracy. They did not create U.S. society's racism; they simply pandered to it. Likewise, Jewish financiers invested in the slave trade, but they were not the prime movers. Jewish bankers also funded the Russian Czars, whose agents led murderous pogroms against Jews. Like all big capitalists, they stopped at nothing in the pursuit of profit.

OPPRESSED AND OPPRESSORS

As for today, Jeffries accuses the Jews of a "systematic, unrelenting" attack on the Black community. The attack is real enough, but singling out "the Jewish community" for blame is a poisonous distortion of reality.

The kernel of truth in this distortion is that middle-class leaders of groups who feel they have made it, including the main Jewish spokesmen, often act as the system's border guards. They try to keep out other minorities because they know the capitalist pie is shrinking and there isn't enough to go around. But the reality is that most U.S. Jews are white-collar workers whose hopes for the future are going downhill. There are still many Jews who know that oppressing others is no way to better themselves or to end the permanent threat of anti-Semitism in capitalist society.

Jeffries' approach is dangerously false most of all because it points the fight against racism away from the real enemy, capitalism. Aimed at safeguarding Blacks from the evils of white society, it accepts the very worst inventions of that society. Race as a biological "fact" has been refuted by science, yet Jeffries embellishes on it. Stereotyping and scapegoating Jews as substitutes for capitalism has long been the trademark of racist and fascist scum, who would of course victimize Blacks as well.

Those who cynically equate Jeffries' anti-Semitism with Hitler's ignore the major difference. The Nazis fed on the nationalism of a dominant group, acquired the backing of the ruling class, and took state power. Jeffries strikes a chord because Blacks are an *oppressed* people desperately fighting to survive — at a time when capitalism's decay prevents most people from improving their lives. This doesn't make anti-Semitism at all acceptable. But it shows the need to defend Jeffries against a hypocritical attack by the establishment.

At CCNY, those who stand for justice and equality must defend Prof. Jeffries from the threats against his job and physical safety without feeling obliged to support his statements or theories. The broadest united struggle is necessary.

Debate on the Gulf War: 'Hands Off Iraq'?

Evelyn Kaye of our editorial board wrote last spring to *Searchlight South Africa (SSA)*, a "Marxist journal of Southern African studies" based in London. She was replying to a January *SSA* editorial criticizing "the left" as a whole for allegedly supporting Iraq's bloody dictator, Saddam Hussein, during the Gulf War. *SSA* commented on her letter in its next issue without printing it. We print here the bulk of Comrade Kaye's letter, *SSA*'s remarks, and our response.

LRP Letter to SSA

I've been impressed by the scrupulously detailed expose of ANC and SWAPO atrocities in the past few numbers of *Searchlight South Africa*. As you probably know, the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) in the U.S. has been raising this issue in our magazine, *Proletarian Revolution*, and we have considered you an invaluable resource in this regard.

However, it is also because of your outstanding efforts on behalf of the ex-SWAPO and ex-ANC detainees, that I found your position on the Gulf conflict all the more shocking. This is the subject matter of this letter.

The war proved what was obvious to Marxists, and to the vast majority of the Arab population, six months ago: the Iraqi masses were the real and immediate targets of the U.S. imperialist intervention against Hussein, an intervention backed to the hilt by British, European, indeed world imperialism. Your editorial board, however, found it *impossible* to conceive of defending the Iraqi masses against this imperialist atrocity. Rather you devote your wrath to "sections of the left" for promoting the slogan, "Hands off Iraq."

According to *SSA*, in the editorial "Third Worldism: The Albatross of Socialism" (in No. 6 of your magazine), this slogan signified a new example of the left's continual capitulation to nationalism — this time to Hussein in particular. You stated:

In unison they call "Hands Off Iraq" and some even declare that in the event of an invasion they will give their full support to Saddam Hussein's regime. Once again there are the same rationalizations. This is an imperialist venture in order to keep control of oil; this is Western capitalism protecting its investments; this is a move to preserve boundaries established by the imperialists when the Ottoman empire collapsed.

You go on in the editorial to repeatedly identify "Hands Off Iraq" with political support for Saddam, concluding, **The answer does not lie in the slogan: Hands Off Iraq!** Nor any other that can only usher in a new, equally iniquitous, equilibrium. Until socialists learn to direct their slogans to the working class, and find a response from that class they will be impotent. Their task is to call for the international solidarity of the workers of all lands; their specific call is for a confederation of the Middle East and the overthrow of the sheikdoms and governing cliques.

There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the political tendencies in the world who identify themselves as socialist or communist have betrayed internationalism in favor of nationalism. Likewise, it has long been clear that patronizing third worldism, which substitutes an uncritical nationalism for the working-class approach, is one of the uglier manifestations of the petty-bourgeois infestation of the left.

However, any serious Marxist analysis of left activity in the advanced countries in the Gulf war period must conclude that capitulation to homegrown imperialist chauvinism is the

far greater menace. Large numbers of reformists naturally supported the imperialists openly. Other leftists supported U.S./U.N. sanctions, the preparation through starvation of the Iraqi people for the saturation bombing. They covered *their* nationalism by equating Hussein's miserable adventure into Kuwait with Bush's imperialist onslaught on Iraq, formally opposed both and called for international peace conferences to settle the issues.

Your "plague on both your houses" stance, appealing to Marxists to take no side while calling for socialism as the answer, leads you to ignore the capitulation to imperialism at home. The rejection of "Hands Off Iraq" can only mean that you could not oppose the U.S.'s *hands-on Iraq* policy, that is, the apocalyptic bombardment of the Iraqi population. The logic is inexorable, despite your stated hostility to the Coalition intervention.

"International solidarity," which you claim to call for, can not be built by taking no side between imperialism and an oppressed nation. (Iraq, despite its oil wealth, is an oppressed nation, economically dependent on the industrial powers.)

Saddam represents a comprador capitalist class in Iraq which plays a role similar to that of the Chinese bourgeoisie under Chiang Kaishek; except that imperialism's toady got a little more out of hand. Crisis-wracked imperialism delivered the message to its pawns everywhere that it had already sent to Noriega in Panama: heel! But as the saturation bombing of Baghdad amply confirms, the real message is to the workers across the world, increasingly restive under deepening exploitation.

Authentic revolutionary communists have always supported the struggle of imperialized nations against imperialist onslaughts. To take neither side in the Gulf war invasion was to take no position on such a struggle. Thus, propaganda for the socialist federation of the Middle East, which is indeed vital, is in your case simply an evangelical figleaf grown on Mt. Olympus.

"Hands Off Iraq" was an elementary slogan for all those who claim to even be democrats, much less anti-imperialists. For revolutionaries, it was incumbent to go further — calling explicitly for the defeat of U.S. & Co.'s imperialism and for military defense of Iraq in the war.

You buttress your neutrality case by creating a false amalgam. You identify all those who hold to a "Hands Off Iraq" position with pro-Khomeini "leftists" and other third worldists who have given *political* support, critical or uncritical, to Saddam. There is the Leninist-Trotskyist position which you may reject but which you know exists: this position gives military support but no political support in cases like this. There were a few groups internationally who stood for such a position, as we did.

After all, the [*SSA*] editorial started out by stating that while you do not support the politics of South African nationalism, and the leaderships are guilty of atrocious acts of repression in many cases, you recognize the need to defend South African nationalist movements — even the leaderships of these organizations at times — against persecution by South African imperialism and its state. You state:

While defending their right to exist and protecting them against the attacks of the government, there can be no support for their intervention in the trade unions or any other working class movement . . . From this it must follow that defence of those movements does not, and cannot, imply support for their aims, their tactics, or their

strategy. To do so would mean the end of an independent socialist movement, the betrayal of the working class and the repudiation of Marxism.

Instead of applying this methodology to the Middle East, as we and others on the left do, you write a fundamentally false polemic — you pretend that the position of military support, which explicitly withholds all political support, never existed — either historically or presently.

SSA's ostensible position was that of opposition to both sides, but actually its case included an imbalance on the side of the U.S., Britain et al.

You said, in opposition to those apathetic about or in favor of the invasion of Kuwait,

Socialists recognize that states must go, but in a capitalist world national sovereignty cannot be decided in a London back-room. The iniquities of the colonial past and the post-colonial present need urgent attention, but that must be left to the people, all the people who live and work there: in Kuwait, in Kurdistan, East Timor, Kashmir, Tibet, Palestine, and so on. Only after they voice an opinion, and the people of adjacent territories are consulted, can such issues be resolved — at least for the present.

Calling for defense of the Kuwaiti state, with its horrific politics and its rotten ruling class, against the Iraqi invasion — but *not* for defense of the Iraqi state, with *its* horrific politics and its rotten ruling class, against an invasion supported by the entire imperialist world? This is indeed, in your words, a “venture into cloud-cuckoo-land.”

As of this writing, Saddam and the Iraqi generals, backed by Washington, are exterminating Kurds. Do you refuse to support a “hands off” position because the Kurdish leaders are bourgeois and corrupt?

Our position on the war was based on an analysis . . . that we are still in the imperialist epoch. The war itself added further proof that, although imperialism has gone through transformations since Lenin and Trotsky outlined its earlier features, its ugly reality is still dominant. . . .

Condemnations of Hussein and support for sanctions and “our troops” abounded in the recently moribund anti-war movement, *not* condemnation of imperialism. Our hatred of nationalism is based on our hatred of imperialism, world capitalism — to which nationalism capitulates. But *direct* capitulation to imperialism in the advanced countries is the dominant trend. Even among third worldists in the advanced countries, the tendency is to accept chauvinist reformism domestically. In the fight against this form of “nationalism” — the worst nationalism, if you will — *Searchlight South Africa* fails.

Searchlight South Africa's Comments

When this journal last appeared, the grand alliance led by America was about to pulverize Iraq. Using the highly developed technology of the space-craft age, the allies set about systematically destroying the enemy. Saddam Hussein, not to be outdone, poured millions of gallons of oil into the Persian Gulf in an act of ecological mayhem. He followed this path with the firing of over 600 oil wells, destabilizing atmospheric conditions for the coming decades. The editors of this journal could support neither side and are proud to have said this before the destruction began. . . .

Then came the uprising in the wake of defeat. Socialists or nationalists who had tacitly or explicitly supported the Saddam regime had to do a rapid U-turn. They now become champions of the Kurds (and the Shi'ites?) and obviously wanted the defeat of Saddam. Even though the Americans

were still there, and even though the anti-imperialist slogans still echoed in their papers, the Kurds were now the issue. What did they say when Bush and his administration refused to support the rebels in the south? And what did they say when the Yanks first refused to come to the aid of the Kurds, and then gave way to liberal voices and provided a safe haven along the Turkish border? Perhaps some did speak sense this time but, if they did, it made little difference. They only demonstrated their own impotence.

One letter-writer from America wrote to us criticizing our original standpoint. We should have been gratified. Someone had read us and been concerned. We were condemned for our earlier stand. Now we were asked: were we not going to support the Kurds? Were we going to reject their pleas because they could be accused of being petty bourgeois nationalists?

We have not printed the letter, as much as we welcome correspondence, because it adds little to our knowledge of events in the Middle East or of our understanding of nationalist movements. But our correspondent deserves an answer on the last point. It is the bounden duty of every socialist to offer help and solidarity to every oppressed people. Solidarity comes easily, help is beyond our means or capabilities. But whatever sympathy we offer, there can be no support for the nationalist leaders. Their role as leaders (whether they wish it or not) is to represent the interest of their class — and this is not that of the workers or peasants. More than that, they will come to terms, as soon as convenient, with their erstwhile oppressors. In the case of the Kurds of Iraq that happened almost before we had a chance to read the disc that was sent to us. . . .

Our Response

No doubt Comrade Kaye's letter “added little” to their “knowledge of events”; after all, she disputed not facts but methodology. And that, in a “Marxist journal,” should be of even more fundamental importance. However, SSA's sneer shows that their method is pure pragmatism.

Indeed, without an adequate methodology one cannot understand what appear to be “facts.” SSA, for example, claims that the U.S. provided the Kurds a “safe haven along the Turkish border.” But, true to form, the U.S.'s Turkish ally bombed and strafed the Kurds’ “safe haven” a few weeks afterwards. SSA's claim shows a naive trust in imperialism — a profound methodological error for any Marxist, precisely the problem Comrade Kaye's letter criticized.

“We should have been gratified” that someone cared enough to write, they say. Indeed. But we suspect the editorialists were a bit less than gratified by the letter's sharp tone and logic. We can say now that the sharpness was entirely deserved. For look at what the reply says about the Kurds.

Every socialist must offer support to oppressed people, on the one hand; but no support is possible for the Kurds' terrible leaders, on the other. A vital distinction, and for Marxists it should lead to the position of military support that Kaye describes. But for SSA it leads elsewhere: that is just what they said about Iraq.

In their view “Hands Off Iraq” supposedly meant support for Saddam Hussein. Presumably “Hands Off the Kurds” would likewise mean support for the pro-bourgeois Barzani and Talabani. So SSA cannot bring itself to demand “Hands Off the Kurds” or anything like it. In both cases SSA shies away from the nationalism of the oppressed only to jump, in reality, into the nationalist lap of the oppressor — in the Kurdish case, that of their hated Saddam Hussein! It is a methodological, and political, disaster. ■

Sex, Lies . . .

continued from page 2

The polls, first of all, have to be interpreted dynamically, since consciousness is often mixed and contradictory. Many whites backed Thomas because his record shows he'll keep blacks "in their place." On the other hand, some in-depth interviews reveal that many working-class men who "believed Thomas" really thought that he had done something of a number on Hill. But they didn't think that what he did, as presented at the hearings, was important enough to keep him from a major job.

Likewise, many women, especially in the lower-paid sections of the working class, objected strongly to Thomas' antics, but for them such harassment is daily fare. Why didn't Hill give it back to him? And if she couldn't, why not quit? After all, she wasn't poor, she had degrees, she could get another job. They couldn't identify Hill's world with theirs.

The hearings reinforced such views. The senators in one way, Hill and the feminists in another, all emphasized the aggressive and nasty sex talk inflicted by Thomas. They downplayed both the sexual threat and the power of bosses over subordinates, which can force both men and women workers to eat shit. The middle-class feminists and liberals believe that class power can be made respectful, with good will on all sides. Like them, Anita Hill believes in careerism; she thinks that compromises made for upward mobility are justified.

Indeed, it is Hill's careerism that makes her testimony believable. She climbed the career ladder and followed an abusive "mentor" from job to job without revealing that her boss, the head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, was violating the very regulations he was supposed to enforce. Ronald Reagan had appointed him precisely to gut protection for women and oppressed minorities. That was the politically conservative Hill's role as well. Ten years later when she came forward, her career was established.

Hill has been called the "Rosa Parks of sexual harassment," after the black woman who refused to go to the back of the bus in the 1950's South. That credit is undeserved. Parks took grave risks to stand up for black people. Hill went along with oppression, standing up for Number One.

RACE AND CLASS

There was a class difference between the working-class women who felt contempt for Hill and the liberal feminists who adored her. The same middle-class outlook motivated the black organizations. Some endorsed Thomas from the start and maintained their support throughout the confrontation with Hill. Even the mainstream civil rights groups who opposed Thomas soft-pedalled their objections, leaving the burden of battle to the feminists. After all, who more than they had interpreted the struggle as putting black faces in high places? So when Thomas, the enemy of affirmative action, was helicoptered onto the Court by the greatest affirmative action of all, how could they protest?

The black leadership points to social mobility as the answer to black impoverishment, insisting that the advance of a handful inevitably benefits the race. The Thomas nomination showed that the opposite is true. But rather than junk their entire outlook, the leaders chose to take a back seat.

Thus they could not deal with the fact that the hearings were racist. Can one imagine that a white man would have faced the intimate questions that Thomas had to answer? Or,

for that matter, would a white woman have been treated as brutally as Hill? Even though the overwhelming majority of blacks do not like what Thomas stands for, it's hard not to admire an articulate and able black man defending himself on the public stage. And from there it's easy to blame Hill, a woman who herself has made it, for undermining a "brother" on the rise.

As ye sow, so shall ye reap. The mainstream black misleaders, like liberals in general, blame the public, not their own teachings. They, after all, are the ones who have gained from the mobility myth; they propagate the lie that the class power of bosses can be mitigated for the common good. Tragically, the working class, in the postwar era of transient prosperity when there was a tiny kernel of truth in these notions, accepted the middle-class outlook. The chickens came home to roost.

The class question also brings to bear the role of the U.S. labor movement. After all, this was a matter of sexual harassment *on the job*, a boss intimidating a worker. What did the AFL-CIO, the powerful bureaucracy that hands millions of dollars to Democrats when it wants to, have to say? Nothing. Like the middle-class careerists and professional liberals, the labor tops insist at every turn that the only realistic course is to accept capitalism and its methods of mobility, however dirty. Typically they too blame the masses for not seeing the light.

We do not defend the present views of the majority of the U.S. working class — women, blacks, not to mention the more conservative white males. Racism and sexism are widespread attitudes that can be demagogically whipped up by politicians needing to hide the real power relations of capitalist society. But consciousness changes, dramatically at times, especially with material circumstance and struggle. Prosperity and the careerism cloak are becoming threadbare. The identification of social good with individual climbing — the anti-working-class view of the middle-class intelligentsia — is being exposed.

The Senate hearings have already had the effect of raising the level of resistance to harassment among some layers of the working class. Thus the openness of the affair was good, despite the racism, sexism and lies. The more working people know about the actual operations of capitalism, the more they'll fight back. And that is the only way to put an end to this sordid system. ■



I would like to receive further information about the LRP.

Name _____

Address _____

LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
Room 201, 170 Broadway, New York NY 10038,

Soviet Workers Face 'Democratic' Repression

The August upheaval in the Soviet Union was hailed by pundits and politicians as a triumph of democracy, the overthrow of the Bolshevik revolution and the end of communism. This universal assessment is wrong on every count.

1. What has ended was the last stage of old-style Stalinist political power, the domination by Communist Party chiefs over the state apparatus. The "socialist state" — more accurately, the workers' state transitional to communism created by the proletarian revolution of 1917 — had been destroyed half a century before in the Stalinist counterrevolution.

The triumph of Stalinism founded a regime of stultified capitalism. The August events only accelerated the long-term bourgeoisification of this system, that is, the adoption of traditional capitalist features. As with the overturns in East Europe in 1989-90, the current Soviet transformation is a stage in a *political* revolution, a power shift from one section of the ruling class to another.

2. Stalinism nevertheless survives in the ex-USSR in another sense: the economy dominated by the state and run by a vast bureaucracy of government administrators and enterprise bosses. The politicians preaching free enterprise, markets and democracy have now gained leverage over the bureaucrats but have not eliminated them. And they can't.

3. The new regime of Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev is pseudo-democratic. Gorbachev wheedled and threat-

ened the semi-democratically elected Soviet Congress to get it to dissolve, thereby establishing a sort of dual presidential rule. Yeltsin's advisers consider their economic (and inevitably also political) model to be the Pinochet dictatorship that tortured Chile until recently. (See below.) He moved to appoint his own prefects in place of officials selected by local soviets. And their Western imperialist allies are committed only to the facade of democracy, not its substance.

4. Authentic communism — Marxism — is by no means defunct. Stalinism, parading as communism, succeeded in defeating the movement for decades. But the present deepening of world capitalism's mortal crisis, along with the political collapse of Stalinism, will hasten the resurgence of both

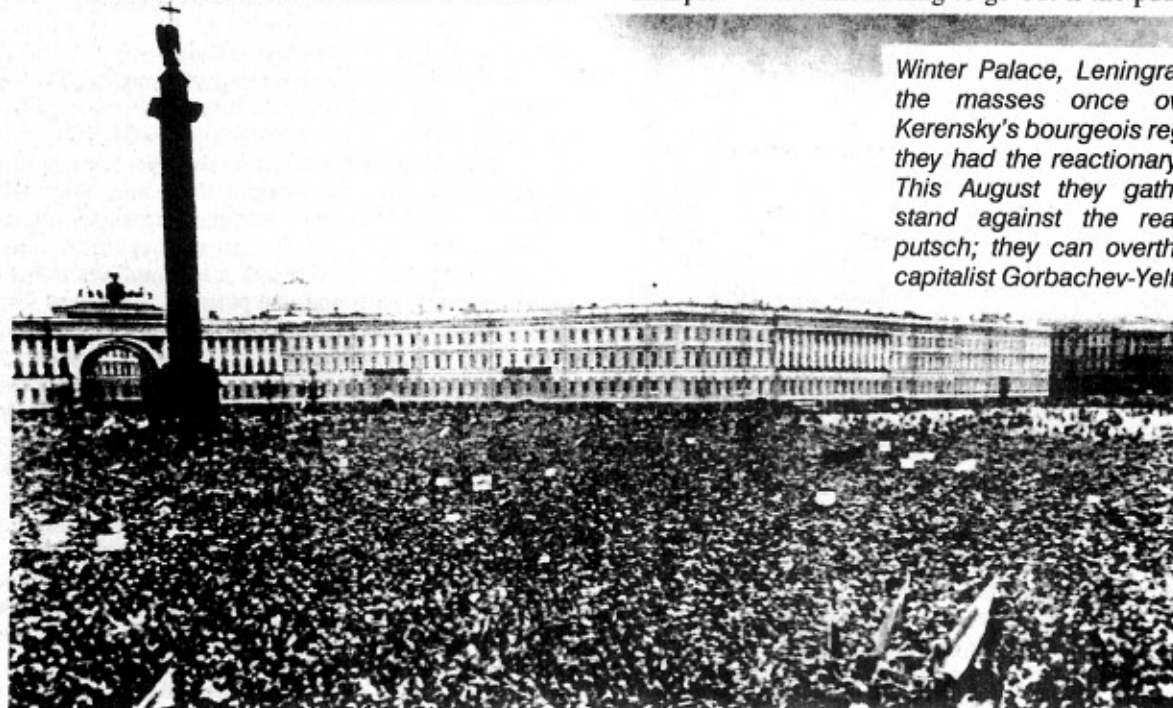
Marxism and a revolutionary proletarian movement. Objective events are far more decisive than the immediate popular misidentification of communism with Stalinism.

Marxism, in fact, teaches us that the intensifying class struggle between the proletariat and all wings of capitalism, in the USSR and elsewhere, brings the issue of working-class communism increasingly to the fore. The reconquest of state power by the Soviet workers would be a *social* revolution.

THE PUTSCH AND THE WORKING CLASS

The mythmaking machinery awards full credit for the success of the counter-putsch to Yeltsin, the bourgeoisie's candidate for Hero of the Soviet Union. A counter-myth argues that neither "people power" nor Yeltsin were crucial: the key factor was the putschists' disunity and incompetence.

Both views are false. A definite role was played by the working class. Workers built and defended the barricades confronting the putschists' tanks at the Russian parliament building. The Moscow crowds were smaller than the Western media portrayed, and workers made up a fair proportion. There were political strikes by many of the most advanced workers: by miners in Siberia, the Ukraine and Vorkuta, and at major factories in Leningrad and Sverdlovsk. These frightened the coup leaders. Other workers — Moscow transit, for example — were threatening to go out if the putsch lasted.



Winter Palace, Leningrad. Here the masses once overthrew Kerensky's bourgeois regime, as they had the reactionary Czar's. This August they gathered to stand against the reactionary putsch; they can overthrow the capitalist Gorbachev-Yeltsin, too.

Overall, however, most workers were inactive, either fearful of civil war or unwilling to fight for one boss against another. Many were confused: they hated the bureaucrats, but at least in the old days there was food at the end of the waiting lines. The extreme indecision followed from the extreme contradictions and the absence of a reliable leadership pointing a way out.

The decisive factor nevertheless was the *potential* of organized workers' resistance. That's the reason the coup leaders immediately announced wage increases and other concessions to workers. A few months before, there had been a strike movement begun by the coal miners, which forced Gorbachev and Yeltsin to join hands. As a Soviet journalist

commented regarding Yeltsin and Gorbachev's compromise last spring, "We all fear the Ceausescu scenario" — that is, a mass uprising. (*Russia and the World*, Fall 1991.) The result of this deal was the "Union Treaty" that would have ended Party control over the economy. This, plus the treaty's acceptance of the breakaway of the separate republics, triggered the coup.

STALINISM'S ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

Behind the coup attempt was the economic crisis of the USSR. Its causes lie far deeper than the absence of free markets blamed by both Soviet and Western experts.

First, the counterrevolution of the 1930's, in restoring capitalism, subjected the USSR to the contradictions of capitalist economy. But the Stalinists feared the strength of the working class and therefore could not destroy every achievement of the workers' state. The surviving remnants — including full employment and a high social wage (subsidized basic foods, health care, etc.) — undermined the rulers' power to discipline the workers.

Traditional capitalism falls into periodic economic crises because the independence of competing capitals leads to overproduction. It makes use of the crises to shut down obsolete enterprises and weaken the industrial strength of the workers, thereby restoring profitability. The Stalinist system also created overproduction because of intense competition over resources. But it did not allow crises to be resolved by the destruction of enterprises. Hence the Stalinist economy fell into a permanent crisis characterized by incessant shortages, and all production was weakened in the long run. (A full analysis is in our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory*.)

Soviet Stalinism flourished during the world capitalist boom of 1945-1970, even carving out a little empire in East Europe by letting the U.S. take the giant share of the spoils of World War II at Yalta. The USSR benefitted from the overall imperialist prosperity, which rested on the defeat of the working class during and after the war. But a succession of workers' revolts in East Europe, from the Stalinist conquest through 1980, forced the rulers to grant more concessions than they could afford. The system's inability to in-

Capitalism Triumphant?

Although "communism" has collapsed, admirers of capitalism have no right to cheer. Nearly one-quarter of the world's population lives in capitalist countries whose Gross Domestic Product fell *absolutely* in the 1980's. In 1990 these "developing" countries repaid a billion and a half dollars to the World Bank more than they received, a telling illustration of how imperialism keeps the world impoverished. And 1991, according to a U.N. report, will be the first year since World War II when total world production and income will have declined.

It is truly an economic holocaust. And this does not speak of the deepening recession in the industrial powers, nor of the twenty-year, twenty percent decline of real wages in the U.S. Just as continually pushing the resolution of crisis conditions into the future brought about Stalinism's economic downfall, Western economies, whose enthusiasts brag about the superiority of private-enterprise capitalism, are following a similar track. They try to postpone a severe crisis by subsidizing crisis-ridden industries and banks as, for example, in the U.S. savings and loan fiasco. But that just means that the explosion will be all the bigger when it too, inevitably, arrives.

crease productivity doomed it to a rapid slowdown and its ultimate disintegration, especially when extensive international economic ties became necessary.

The Western economic crisis of the past two decades led to deeper crises in the East. For example, Poland's leaders decided to borrow enormous sums from the West in order to buy off their restive working class with consumer goods. But when the postwar boom ended, there was no surplus left as sops for the workers. The result was the massive workers' movement of 1980-81, a clear threat to ruling-class power despite the workers' reformist leadership.

In the USSR the danger could be postponed longer because of its profitable oil exports. Nevertheless, the inescapable danger inspired Gorbachev to embrace his reforms known to the world as *perestroika* and *glasnost*. *Perestroika* (restructuring) aimed to save the economy by giving managers room to increase productivity and by eliminating layers of central bureaucrats. *Glasnost* (voice without vote) was added to make the reform palatable to a layer of intellectuals and to forestall workers' revolts.

But the partial reforms undermined existing management methods without establishing workable markets or alternative means of distribution. This encouraged the hoarding of goods while "mafia" monopolists (and bureaucrats with access to state resources) maneuvered to get higher prices. Firms were forced to turn to barter, a highly inefficient mode of exchange. Worse shortages resulted, along with the escalation of gross corruption and economic inequality.

FACTIONS OF THE RULING CLASS

Most analysts see the attempted coup as a struggle between two political forces, bureaucrats seeking to restore their former power and democratic liberal reformers. But this appraisal ignores the class question. The whole ruling class agrees that it has to raise productivity and increase the extraction of surplus value by stepping up exploitation of the workers. It has been fighting over who can do it and how.

The liberals understand that traditional Stalinist methods cannot meet international competition. They look forward to using bourgeois tools like unemployment and "free" prices to force the workers into docility. They want to incorporate the bourgeoisie into the ruling class with a leading role. And they're in a hurry, since the present halfway-house with no one in charge has thrown the Soviet economy into free fall.

The conservative approach, already watered down after five years of *perestroika*, is to slow down the liberalization process. The traditionalists know that some bourgeoisification is necessary, both to discipline the workers and to lure Western support. But they want to go slow, out of a justified fear of social unrest and a desire for maintaining their own property and power — either by becoming outright bourgeois or by devising a more decentralized form of state property. They also fear the loss of resources and military vulnerability brought about by the loss of empire and the national break-up, and that the mass mobilizations inspired by nationalism could bring the working class onto the political stage.

Gorbachev's balancing (or oscillating) act sought to free the ruling class from Stalinist "planning," preserve part of the bureaucracy and allow some private enterprise. Shortly before the coup he led the Party to drop "Marxism-Leninism" from its canon, denigrate the Bolshevik revolution and renounce its rhetorical commitment to the class struggle. Many high Party cadre had already bourgeoisified themselves, by buying the enterprises they run at bargain rates, or by using the funds they manage to set up banking operations.

Soviet leftist Boris Kagarlitsky says that the putsch was so weak and stupid that it must have been provoked by Yel-

tsin, possibly through a deal that was promised and then revoked. (*Socialist Organizer/Britain*, August 29.) But it is politically far more likely that the coup was a desperate attempt by bureaucrats, faced with economic crisis and the loss of their power, to preserve social stability.

In this the putschists hoped to win over both Gorbachev and the West — especially the social conservative Bush, known to distrust the populist Yeltsin. Hence their reluctance to use force. Indeed, Bush's initial reaction, rarely remembered in the U.S. was grudgingly neutral. But the unpopularity of the coup, plus pressure (above all from Germany) not to desert "personal" allies like Gorbachev, stiffened Washington's hand. Western support, broadcast happily by Yeltsin, was in turn a factor in bringing down the coup. (And the victors are repaying their backers, having already thrown Cuba to the wolves of U.S. imperialism.)

Fundamentally the coup failed because it was premature: the working class had not been defeated or sufficiently demoralized in advance, as in Chile in 1973 or Poland in 1981. This point is central to the analysis of Stalinism presented in this magazine for many years. It explains why the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, for example, were unable to introduce all-out Stalinism: the revolutionary workers and peasants remained undefeated. It also explains why the postwar Stalinist regimes in East Europe did not introduce full statification at once. They had to first smash the working-class movement. This summer the Stalinist plotters expected that the Soviet workers had already been softened up for dictatorship by the deepening crisis. They were wrong. But now the liberals hope to use the disastrous economy for similar ends.

WHERE IS THE USSR HEADING?

The aborted coup drove the hard Stalinists out of contention. The top layers of the military and economic bureaucracy were removed, but millions of officials still man the state apparatus and dominate the economy. Many of the arrogant and sycophantic old Stalinists, politically repainted, are already active in Yeltsin's regime. And when a future hard alternative is found necessary, the old repressive Stalinist methods will be found useful again.

Many of the post-coup changes had been under way well before. The Party's "leading role" had been officially ended, private property in the means of production had been permitted, the central state was making wide concessions to the republics, and the USSR's international subordination to Western imperialism was well established.

But as in East Europe, few major enterprises have been privatized. Few big capitalists are interested in investing in obsolete enterprises, and during the world recession few can afford risky ventures. Even the International Monetary Fund prefers the "commercialization" of the public sector in the post-Stalinist states as a first phase. In the USSR, with the liberals now having their way, squabbles have broken out among them over national and economic policies, with no one, not even Yeltsin, taking a clear lead.

The real struggle, however, will be against the working class. After the coup, a Yeltsin spokesman said that "people who stood three nights in the rain to protect Yeltsin" would "accept sacrifice." Indeed, Yeltsin and Gorbachev had signed their so-called "anti-crisis pact" in April banning further strikes and demanding hard work to make up for lost time.

A crucial factor is the sentiment in the working class. Many say they favor privatization in the abstract because anything seems better than Stalinism. But in the concrete they hate the profiteers who feed off human labor and human needs. This feeling is stronger in the USSR than even in East Europe, for there the heritage of the Bolshevik

revolution has not been fully erased.

Yeltsin's post-coup crackdown was not just against the Communist Party but against *all* parties and unions. (Workers should therefore have opposed it, of course without defending the obscene privileges of the CP's top cadres). An edict that tried to make effective working-class organizing illegal had in fact been issued for Russia in July:

Structures representing new or existing political parties and organizations may not operate in state bodies, in the executive committees of local soviets at all levels, or in state enterprises . . . Individuals are free to join political parties or public organizations but may partici-



Berlin, August 1991: East European masses protest Stalinist coup. Economic chaos is helping them overcome illusions in capitalism.

pate in their activities only outside working hours and not on working premises.

Yeltsin reaffirmed this decree after the coup. Gorbachev waffled in response. Enforcement of this and similar edicts will be difficult, especially where the workers have already initiated their own unions and factory committees.

The main economic change at first will not be privatization but accelerating the "freeing" of enterprises to close down or raise prices. That was the aim of the "big bang" in Poland starting in January 1990, where real wages fell by one-third and productivity also declined — while the main state monopolies remain. The hostility of Polish workers has led even President Lech Walesa, who campaigned for office promising to accelerate bourgeoisification, to distance himself from his liberal economic appointees:

We made a mistake by introducing reforms too quickly . . . We're faced with terrible problems, with very high unemployment and machines out of commission. . . .

That's capitalist philosophy for you. We were naive: we believed all those slogans and were sold down the river.

Left Flunks Another Test

The Soviet coup was a critical test for the left. Steering an authentic communist path between the shoals of pseudo-democracy and pseudo-socialism takes a firm grasp of working-class interests and Marxist theory. In the U.S., the results were disastrous. Even the "Trotskyist" groups proved once again their underlying middle-class bias.

Worst, not surprisingly, was the Workers World Party, which unswervingly holds that Stalinism equals socialism. Following its endorsements of the Beijing massacre and the Ceausescu regime, it hailed the Soviet coup and "looks forward to the complete restoration of socialist development in the USSR" — just the path the anti-working class, pro-imperialist putschists had in mind.

The Spartacist League, true to its tradition that defense of "workers' states" begins and ends with Stalinism, called on workers to disperse the "counterrevolutionary rabble" opposing the coup. "Any class-conscious Soviet worker," it added, "would certainly have been against Yeltsin, but critical of the coup . . ." because it was doomed to fail. Still, the Spartacists, flinching at the logic of their Stalinist defensism, deny that this means "critical support" for the putsch.

The Communist Party had room for supporting both sides in the Soviet ruling class. Chairman Gus Hall backed the ouster of the "anti-socialist" Gorbachev's at first, then retreated to a democratic-constitutionalist line, agreeing with "the intent but not the method of the coup." Others in the CP leadership, however, admire Gorbachev for trying to solve the myriad problems they previously didn't admit existed. Thus the *People's Weekly World* denounced the "left and right extremists" between whom he had tried for so long to balance. Both factions urged support for the Soviet Communists, who were "fighting for their elementary right to present their view to the Soviet people" — a right the Party had denied to everyone else for sixty years.

These three organizations typically expect socialism to come from tailing the Stalinist bureaucrats, not workers' revolution. But opponents of the coup who admire an abstract "democracy" independent of working-class interests were equally confused.

The Socialist Workers Party enthused that Soviet workers won a "giant victory" when "their resistance" ended the coup. In going on to resist the Yeltsinites, the *Militant* added, workers should look to counsel from the Cuban leaders — who, predictably, maintained a watchful neutrality during the events and were no doubt hoping for the Soviet Union to return to Stalinist policies like their own.

The Socialist Action group greeted the anti-coup "popular uprising" as the equal of the Bolshevik Revolution. Their Moscow eyewitness unaccountably saw "not a single instance of defacement of Lenin's statues and posters." It was, in sum, "the beginning of the [proletarian] political revolution," even though "the Soviet workers have not yet begun to take action in their own name." People who believe that "workers' states" were created in East Europe after World War II (when the Stalinists smashed the workers' movement) should hardly quibble at so minor a detail.

Unlike those who found something to support, the Spark group maintained a cynical face against everything, even the defeat of the reactionary coup. In three pages of analysis, the we-know-how-to-talk-to-workers *Spark* said not

a word about what workers did or should have done about the coup. Its one hint was the comment that the working class is "the only force in Soviet society whose interest is served by democratic control of the population over society" — as if "democracy" was the basic need in a society desperate for a revolutionary solution.

All the organizations cited so far consider the USSR to be a socialist or workers' state. None of them explained how a supposedly progressive world power, a state superior to capitalism, could have degenerated to the point of political and economic breakdown. None remarked that millions of workers declined to defend "their" state against capitalist "restoration." While pointing to this danger, all assumed that it could be accomplished peacefully, as if a state isn't an institution for the forcible defense of specific class interests.

For the self-styled Trotskyists, the real operative notion underlying their "deformed workers' state" formula is that Stalinism is a third system, halfway between socialism and capitalism. This allows most of them to applaud the regimes' fall. But if it is state property that makes the Stalinist states "post-capitalist," then any Marxist ought to defend the states based on state property. That also means defending those forces, however unpalatable, who would slow down the elimination of state property.

There is no U.S. tendency that openly labels Stalinism such a third system. There is one in Britain, the Socialist Organiser group, which analyzed the counter-coup as a stage in the bourgeois revolution against the "collectivist bureaucratic ruling class." Moreover, "the Stalinist world until recently had fallen backwards in history hundreds of years." This should mean that the "bourgeois revolution" is socially progressive and should be supported — a terrible strategy for workers who face stepped-up capitalist exploitation.

The International Socialism tendency calls Stalinism state capitalist and has recently adopted the line of posing as the only true Trotskyists. Yet it grossly adapted to bourgeois propaganda by plastering London with posters asking "After the Death of Communism, Is There a Future for Socialism?" to announce a speech by Tony Cliff, head of the Socialist Workers Party. It took the correct position of momentarily blocking with the anti-coup forces and opposing the liberals' claim to state power. But it showed its true politics by refusing to oppose the super-exploitative bourgeoisification trend, on the grounds that *all* forms of capital exploit the workers. IS's anti-Trotskyist theory ignores the partial gains preserved by Soviet workers despite the Stalinist overthrow of their state.

The ex-Maoist Marxist-Leninist Party, which also has a theory of state capitalism, denounced all ruling-class wings in the Soviet coup and seemed pleased that workers took action against the putschists. But they could not openly *advocate* such action, since that would mean accepting the "Trotskyist" tactic of military support. Having argued, pathetically, for months that military defense of Iraq against U.S. imperialism was unprincipled, they were unable to shift ideological gears. The MLP's problem is that their Stalinist habit of hating everything Trotskyist keeps them from recognizing a correct position even when they stumble onto it.

But now everyone is going to have to pick up the bill, including the West. (*Le Monde*, Sept. 11.)

Unfortunately, in capitalist philosophy the burden is meant to be borne by the working class, as Walesa knows.

Poland is not unique. In the five independent East European countries where Stalinism was overthrown in 1989 (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria), industrial production fell 17 percent in 1990; the figure will likely be almost as high in 1991. In the new USSR, 1000 percent inflation is forecast this year. Grain distribution is way down; many reports warn of upcoming food shortages this winter. And the Soviets may even have to import oil!

The U.S. press reported the Stalinist putschists' admiration for the Pinochet regime in Chile. "The more pragmatic bureaucrats who serve the new regime might imagine a Chinese- or Chilean-style economic liberalization that secures the position of the ruling elite." (*New York Times*, Aug. 20.)

But the Yeltsinites' predilection for the same dictatorship has received less coverage. The French monthly *Le Monde Diplomatique* (September) reported on a conference in Santiago, Chile, last April "dedicated to Soviet economists" on the theme of the "Chilean experiment with economic reform."

The participants included a Russian parliamentary deputy, Yuri Boldirev, and an adviser to Boris Yeltsin. They had a "very warm" meeting with General Pinochet. The economist A. Naimul described as "fantastic" the economic transformations realized by the general, while Boldirev spoke of a reform (in Chile) "which tended to guarantee freedom not only to the strong but to the weak." He added: "In this country, they have created mechanisms which, on the one hand, guarantee the state's non-interference in the economy and, on the other hand, prevent the abuse of people by political par-

ties, social organizations, etc., for their own purposes."

If the liberals get their way, the USSR will be open to exploitation like a third-world country. The esteem for the Chilean "solution" by both Stalinists and liberals reflects the fact that no Soviet leader has any other answer to the economic crisis other than strongman rule. As a KGB analysis observed, "the collapse of the system that outlived itself cleared the path for establishing a strong authoritarian regime in our country in a moderate national-democratic wrapping." (Dimitri Simes, *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, Oct. 20.)

NATIONALISM RAMPANT

The Soviet rulers' goal of deepening exploitation by adopting bourgeois reforms requires not just repression but the political incorporation of the working class. Nationalism is the favored technique for inducing the masses to sacrifice. The bloodbaths already perpetrated in Azerbaijan and Georgia, not to mention the cruel civil war in Yugoslavia, show what depths of nationalist hatred the post-Stalinist rulers are capable of encouraging.

For decades Stalinism stifled national feelings, at the same time that it strengthened them by national oppression under the banner of "socialism in one country." It encouraged dominant-nation chauvinism, sometimes aiding one oppressed nation over another to keep them in conflict and leave central control unchallenged. Nationalism flourishes now because of the economic disaster: people see no alternative but to scapegoat "others."

The post-Stalinist liberals are stirring the nationalist pots as best they can. Yeltsin threatened to redraw boundaries with other republics where Russians live. His "Great Russian" chauvinism would deny national rights to minorities living within the Russian republic. Several seceding republics

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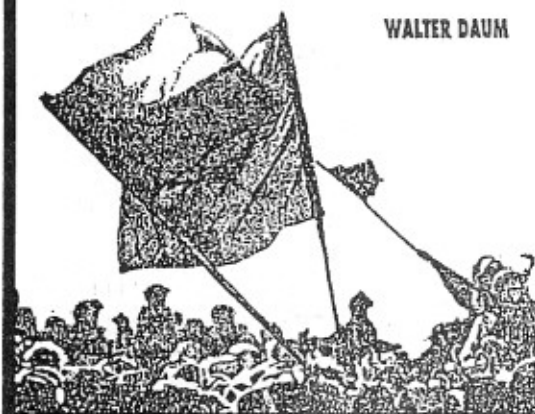
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WALTER DAUM



are also trying to deny rights to local minorities, including resident Russians. Yeltsin has had friendly words for the fascist Pamyat and frequent appearances with the reactionary patriarch Alexis II.

Nor were the putschists an internationalist alternative. Trying to put a lid on national separatism, they appealed to a virulent pan-Slavist nationalism, as in the manifesto they issues when momentarily in power: "Our multinational people have lived for centuries, proud of their Motherland." As if the Czarist prisonhouse of nations — or Stalin's — brought joy to the enslaved peoples. "Motherland" was repeated over and over, while "socialism" was never mentioned.

The real alternative is proletarian self-organization and revolution. As Lenin said, the "most difficult but most important task is to merge the class struggle of the workers in the oppressing nations with the class struggle of the workers in the oppressed nations." Marxists defend the right of national self-determination, the right of each nation to form its own state. We do so in order to fight against imperialism and national oppression from the side of the victims.

But in contrast to Stalinists and reformist leftists, we make no concession to the nationalist misleaders of the oppressed. Even those of the reformist variety, like Walesa, inevitably become oppressors themselves — and like the post-war anti-colonial leaders as well, are forced to crawl back to imperialist domination after nominal independence. Nationalism is a bourgeois ideology, no answer to the political and economic crises of capitalism. Stalin's Soviet nationalism failed despite the USSR's military and economic size. All the more are the smaller nationalisms doomed to fail, especially since the era of capitalist prosperity is over.

This magazine foresaw the fascist danger when Stalinism began to founder in Poland (see our Winter 1982 issue), in contrast to many leftists who welcome left-talking nationalists of either the Stalinist or openly pro-Western variety. Nationalism will of course be a prime tool invoked by any future Bonapartist or fascist chief. Whether Yeltsin or some neo-Stalinist will play that role cannot be predicted. Tragically, the desperate need for a strong regime to grasp hold of the plummeting economy may attract working-class support.

TASKS OF THE WORKING CLASS

The desperate need in the Soviet Union is the building of a proletarian revolutionary party that can show the way out of the morass through mass popular control of the economy. The flirtations with Yeltsin and privatization by the fledgling workers' organizations are a disastrous course that must be reversed. Decentralization means only profiteering and suffering for workers. Real centralization, a democratically organized economy, is the only way out of the crisis.

What should communist workers have done during the coup attempt? First, fight for class independence through class-based organizations. Second, oppose the putsch and its state of emergency, which banned independent working-class activity. This meant a temporary military bloc with the pseudo-democratic forces during the fighting. The junta would have cracked down on workers' rights at once, while the "democrats" will take longer. Every breathing space to develop workers' self-activity is vital.

Now the main danger to the working class comes from the victors, the Yeltsin/Gorbachev side. Given the crisis conditions, there is no space for bourgeois democracy.

The Soviet working class is the immense majority: manual workers alone are over 60 percent of the population. A *Moscow News* poll in January 1990 showed that Soviets favored socialism over capitalism by a large margin, while

they also opposed the top-down command system. The gap in consciousness is that egalitarian ideas of socialism are not associated with the power of the workers as a class.

In the class struggle that will flare up as the regime tries to consolidate, several transitional programmatic steps are essential to help revolutionaries convince their fellow workers of the need for revolution and genuine socialism:

- Arm the working class and forming workers' militias, for self-defense against both future coups and legal crackdowns by the "liberals." Workers should demand weapons from forces who claim to be on the side of "the people."
- Defy the Gorbachev-Yeltsin ban on strikes. Demand that the republics and local soviets abolish all restrictions on the rights to strike, to assemble and to organize.
- Organize workers' soviets in every workplace and locality; elect delegates to a central workers' soviet. Such a workers' council was the main arena for the workers' political development in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917; it opens up the path of dual power and workers' revolution.
- Defend the right of national self-determination for all oppressed peoples, including nationalities within the official republics. Build working-class links across national frontiers.
- Workers' control over food supplies to stop shortages and profiteering. A sliding scale of wages (full cost of living indexation) to defend against inflation. A sliding scale of working hours to divide the necessary work among all available workers and end unemployment.
- Oppose the privatization schemes, whether enterprises are sold to bureaucrats or private capitalists. Open the books of enterprises the bureaucracy mismanages and place them under workers' management.
- To break workers from the bourgeois liberals and their imperialist allies, the abolition of NATO (a standing menace to revolutionary struggles in Europe and elsewhere) and the renunciation of the immense debt to the West.
- A general strike against the inevitable capitalist attacks on the working class. Preparation is needed to strengthen the links among the isolated workers' organizations. A general strike would show the working class its real power and prepare the ground for a mass revolutionary party.

Authentic communism is the real program of the working class, arising out of its own objective needs; it is not just an idea or an ideology. Even now, when mass illusions in capitalism are rife, reality reasserts itself at the heart of the workers' struggle. Take one example. No workers in the post-Stalinist countries have been so combative as the Romanian miners, and none have been as grievously misled. Still, the objective nature of their condition intrudes. According to the *New York Times* (October 3):

As they swarmed through Parliament, the miners themselves shouted "Down with Communism!" as they called for greater job security and higher wages.

"They were shouting anti-Communist slogans, but all their demands were Communist-style demands," said Mr. Isarescu [head of the Central Bank], who noted that the miners attacked privately held shops, one of the few symptom's of Romania's fledgling market system.

The seeming contradiction is easily explained. Stalinist "communism" was dogma and deception. For the working class, communism reflects its real, material interests.

The present period offers an unprecedented opportunity for revolutionaries to win Soviet workers. Ruling-class authority is uncertain; Western imperialism is strategically divided and economically weak. But the opportunity has to be seized. The alternative is a regime of austerity, Bonapartism and later fascism over a prostrate working class. ■

Nationalism Shatters Yugoslavia

As we write, all-out war rages in Yugoslavia, punctuated by futile ceasefires. The Yugoslav state, torn between nationalist armies and buffeted by imperialist maneuvers, hardly exists any longer.

The conflict is not the simple resurgence of age-old Balkan quarrels, as bourgeois spokesmen say. It was fomented by nationalist leaders who have no other way to maintain their exploitative rule. Blaming the "Slavic masses" as if they were genetically deformed is racism, aimed to conceal the divide-and-conquer role of Stalinism and its bourgeois successors.

As Stalinist rule in East Europe collapsed, three of the six full-member republics of Yugoslavia — Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia — chose separation, and the first two have declared their secession. The Serbian-controlled federal government at first invaded Slovenia with infantry and armor, but soon withdrew, allowing de facto independence. It backed down because Slovenia contains few Serbs, so that a solid majority supported secession; and because the battles led to military mobilization by Austria and credible threats of intervention from German imperialism.

In Croatia the course has been quite different. Here the Serbian rulers are trying to annex large regions. Since the areas of majority Serbian population do not border Serbia, the federal forces are terrorizing border areas with air raids and artillery bombardment in order to drive Croats out.

Their goal is to create a Greater Serbia, absorbing Montenegro (the other majority-Serbian republic) and parts of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The latter is the home of the Serbo-Croatian-speaking Muslim nationality, as well as of millions of Serbs and Croats. Elements of the sizable Serbian minority in Croatia, armed and organized by the federal army, have fought as the latter's auxiliary. Although many of them have been oppressed in Croatia, they have now tragically become tools of great-Serbian domination.

The first signs of Yugoslavia's impending breakup came three years ago with the events in Kosovo, an "autonomous region" of the Serbian republic with a majority Albanian population. Worried by the growing numbers and militancy of the largely working-class Albanian population, the Serbian government effectively ended Kosovar home rule. The Albanian struggle for a Republic of Kosovo was spearheaded by strikes, particularly by miners. Working-class prominence in the national struggle, as well as reports of fraternization between Albanian and Serbian workers, give reason to hope that the upsurge in Kosovo will have more immediately progressive consequences than in the other struggles.

IMPERIALISM'S ROLE

Nationalism of any variety is bourgeois and reactionary, at a time when capitalism offers no way out of deepening decay. What all the nationalist leaders have in common is the need to more efficiently exploit "their" workers. The secessionists, especially from wealthier Slovenia and Croatia, prefer not to share surplus value with the central government. In Serbia, both Stalinists and anti-communist opposition support crushing self-determination to expand their domination. The difference is that the Serbians, controlling the armed forces, have the power to enforce their bourgeois drives. A key impetus is the economic crisis: Yugoslavia's industrial production has fallen 50% since 1989.

The separatist leaderships in Slovenia and Croatia are bourgeois and pro-Western. They have made clear their intent to open their territories to intensified exploitation by European capital. In Croatia, the nationalist government of

Franjo Tudjman is resurrecting the symbols of the World War II Ustasha government, fascist puppet of Nazi Germany so murderous that it was an embarrassment to the SS. (Tudjman himself fought in Tito's Stalinist Partisans *against* the Ustasha and was until recently a member of the former ruling Communist Party.) On the Serbian side, President Slobodan Milosevic is already not far from fascism and is allied with the fascistic Chetniks.

The response of the imperialist powers to the outbreak of the conflict was at first to come down strongly for maintaining Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia. But Germany and its junior partner, Austria, immediately stated their willingness to accept Slovenian and Croatian independence. Germany has asserted its won imperialist interest in these areas, effectively sidetracking the early ineffectual efforts of Washington to hold Yugoslavia together.

The new rivalry between the U.S. and Britain on one hand and Germany on the other is only starting. The European powers, with U.S. support, have been brokering the series of farcical ceasefires that favor Serbia. But all, including the U.S., now accept the possibility of Yugoslavia's division. The present Yugoslav conflict will serve only imperialism, not the masses of any nationality. The call by the beleaguered Croatian secessionists for European intervention means relying on the benevolence of an oppressor.

THE COMMUNIST ANSWER

Authentic communists support the right of all nations to self-determination. This means that the inhabitants themselves have the right to choose secession, autonomy, federation or union as they see fit. It does not necessarily mean that we *advocate* secession. In Yugoslavia, because of the Serbian offensive, the Slovenes and Croats have been pushed to the point where they can see no alternative to independence. We stand with the Slovenes, Croats, Albanians and Muslims — despite their counterrevolutionary leaderships and ideologies — against the federal army and its allied Serbian irregular forces.

But the war makes clear that the nationalist road is a disaster. Drawing borders between intermingled nationalities is impossible and has led to massacres, mass expulsions and slaughter, literally within families. The struggle against Serbian repression cannot free the masses from imperial domination unless it is transformed into an internationalist proletarian struggle against capitalism. Otherwise, whether through Serb-led Yugoslavia, Greater Serbia, or a new set of nations, imperialism will inevitably hold the real power.

Proletarian internationalists advocate the right to self-determination because we side with people fighting their oppressors. We try to help break the masses of the oppressed nationalities from their nationalist leaders. When it comes to war, therefore, this means a policy of military and technical — not political — support to the nationalist misleaders.

Defense of self-determination is also necessary for proletarian unity, which can only be based on recognizing the equality of peoples. Unity of workers of all nationalities is the only answer. Those Serbs who have opposed the invasion of Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, notably the soldiers' mothers who demonstrated against mobilization, and the Serbian reservists who deserted en masse, have taken mighty steps to show that the Serbian masses are not the enemy. A genuine revolutionary communist party would build on these actions to show the working-class alternative to the horrors of nationalism. ■

New York Train Crashes, Union Derailed

The leaflet below was issued by a Transit Workers Union Local 100 shop steward, an LRP supporter, shortly after the terrible subway crash in New York City this past summer. While all Transit workers mourned the dead, most were disgusted by the initial reaction of the union leadership. As described below, Local president Sonny Hall immediately succumbed to the media/police/management anti-worker campaign by calling for random drug testing of union members.

By not even doing the bare minimum for motorman Robert Ray, jailed (for murder!) after the crash, Hall and his executive board left him swinging and let all members know, once again, that when the bosses attack, they're on their own.

It doesn't have to be this way. That is clear from another incident in early October involving workers at Kings County Hospital, a municipal institution in Brooklyn. A prisoner sent there for treatment died, apparently of strangulation after a struggle with personnel from the hospital and the Corrections Department. The District Attorney immediately accused the nurses' aides, the lowest-paid workers, of murder.

Jim Butler, president of their union, Local 420 of AFSCME District Council 37 in New York, quickly held a press conference defending the accused workers, putting the union's resources behind them and correctly blaming hospital management for the accident. President Butler heads a local not known for its militancy, and he supports of the labor-victimizing mayor of New York, David Dinkins. So his promises of full union support to his members are dubious. But at least he started out by emphatically defending them, not throwing them to the wolves. Sonny Hall and his toadies give even spineless sellout bureaucrats a bad name!

Nor do they show any signs of learning from the debacle. Secretary-Treasurer Damaso Seda, Hall's heir-apparent, stated that since Congress is passing legislation mandating drug testing for transport workers, the union should voluntarily adopt such testing before the feds make them do it.

Doing the Sonny Hall Crawl

The Tragic Subway Crash and the Bosses' Offensive

The Brooklyn-bound #4 train crashed north of Union Station on August 27. Although repairs are complete enough to allow most service to resume, many workers in New York will be trying to pick up the pieces for years to come. The five dead and over 150 injured were largely lower-wage Black and Latino workers, who particularly depend on mass transit.

The TA bosses, the capitalist media and the cops immediately launched a campaign of mass hysteria against the accused crash train operator Robert Ray. We don't know what Brother Ray did or didn't do. But he certainly wasn't guilty of *murder*. And killer cops, TA management and the capitalist media and courts are the last ones who should judge him. The cops grabbed Ray, held him incommunicado, interrogated him for hours on end, kept a lawyer from seeing him — they used the same KGB-style tactics the Soviet peoples hated so much. That's supposed to be unconstitutional.

Also outrageous was the hypocrisy of TA management and the media over the fate of the passengers on the crash train, compared to their attitude toward workers who die every day in New York waiting for hospital care, cut back for budgetary reasons. *And when a transit worker is killed on the job, as many of us are each year, they show near-total unconcern.* TA management's real motivation quickly became clear: the crash was the excuse the TA was waiting for to ram ran-

None of the events came as a surprise, neither the crash nor the stampede of the union leadership before so-called public opinion. Transit workers and even some union officials had been warning for years that a major accident was inevitable, because of management's chaotic "capital improvements," speedup, and workforce reductions. President Hall tried last year to slip random drug testing past the membership, until the outcry from the ranks forced him tentatively to oppose it — in words, for a while. Then the August crash gave him and management an excuse.

BOSSSES LOSE COURT SUIT ON DRUGS

In October the TA settled for \$5.6 million a lawsuit filed by 1800 workers who had been fired or not hired because of inaccurate and unjustified drug tests. This kind of harassment is the real purpose of such testing.

Now the TWU faces negotiations on a contract extended since its expiration on April 31, along with a Local election. Since the New York City budget crisis of 1975-76 and the miserably led 1980 TWU strike, the union leaders have done all they can to extend contracts and exclude even the thought of strikes or any other membership mobilization. The present election, coming for once just before a contract settlement, finds the opposition New Directions caucus denouncing the sellout maneuvers of the leadership but calling for little else but union democracy.

They are not using the opportunity to make the election a referendum on the contract, with their own proposals for wage and benefit increases and most important, a fighting strategy to end givebacks. This means not just saying "possibly, strikes," but organizing for an actual strike of transit workers as a lead-in to a *general strike*. When transit workers see how to struggle against the bosses' attacks, then they'll see the need to fight for union democracy to carry that fight out, not the other way around.

dom drug testing down our throats. But random testing prevents no accidents; it's good only for intimidation and harassment.

The TA is also campaigning for workers to denounce each other to management for, basically, acting suspicious. Local 100 TWU President Sonny "Bootlicker" Hall panicked and beat them to the punch — he took the initiative in surrendering our longheld opposition to random drug-testing. Instead of fighting for genuine safety measures; instead of showing the working class in this city how the racist labor-hating TA management is to blame for lousy, life-threatening service, Bootlicker Hall joined the bosses' campaign to paint us as a bunch of drunken, drug-crazed criminals.

THE WORST CRIMINALS — TA MANAGEMENT

The facts show a hundred times over who most endangers workers' lives:

Fact: Many subway accidents in the past ten years were due to train operators exhausted from driving double shifts under management orders.

Fact: Many accidents in the past few years were due to Train Operator trainees with insufficient experience being assigned to passenger service by management.

Fact: Management pressures train operators to enter sta-

tions at excessive speeds, in order to meet unrealistic schedules.

Fact: NYCTA President Kiepper wrote a memo calling for cutbacks especially in neighborhoods with "less political influence." In plain language that means less service and safety for Black and Latino workers and poor people.

Fact: In 1989 alone 5 transit workers died on the job, not to mention scores injured. A train recently brushed a track-worker clearing up in an unmarked insufficient clearance area. Track management is taking their time finding and marking the many unmarked insufficient clearance areas, but General Superintendent Calandrella did issue a memo instructing supervision to clear tools up adequately for train movement.

Fact: TA management long neglected to replace 90-year-old safety equipment with readily available modern technology while hiring an army of useless managers in the past six years at salaries and benefits of upwards of \$200,000,000 per year. And that's not to mention the billions of dollars in bond payments the TA makes to wealthy Wall Street parasites.

Fact: The safety equipment at the crash site is set up wrong by their own standards: the trip arm at the crash site is 35 feet before the switch, when TA flagging rules call for trippers to be set up at least 150 feet before work sites. If management had set that tripper up correctly, such a terrible accident would never have happened.

These are just a few of the facts that show the TA's criminal unconcern for the lives and safety of their own employees and the rest of the city's working class. And on the subject of criminal justice, consider this: 25 workers died over a week ago in a poultry-processing plant fire due to criminal management negligence, and management there has yet to be accused of any crime. Almost two years ago TA management negligence murdered Trackworker Byrne. More than a year later Attorney General Abrams (a "friend of labor") started criminal proceedings against the management swine responsible — but none of them have been indicted yet. At this rate, Train Operator Ray may be eligible for parole before Trackworker Byrne's killers are even booked.

THE UNION AND BOOTLICKER HALL

What did the TWU, Brother Ray's only protection, do? They did the *Sonny Hall Crawl*. The union sent a lawyer to the precinct house — that's the only thing they did to defend Brother Ray's rights. And then Bootlicker Hall, without waiting to hear any drug test results volunteered us to undergo random drug testing. He said he was sure the membership was in favor — after years of our standing against it and without any discussion, let alone vote. The next time Bootlicker talks about his love for democracy, he may be drowned

out by the sound of members vomiting.

To add insult to injury, Bootlicker and his honchos, Recording Secretary Fulton and Secretary-Treasurer Seda, sent the members a letter (not the usual one steering us to their favorite dentists) that tried to make out that Bootlicker's caving in on drug testing was actually a clever trick to make the bosses settle our contract faster!

The Prez also made his favorite argument that the best way to prevent a drug-testing onslaught is to ask for a partial onslaught. That's like saying that the best way to fend off sharks is by giving them a little blood. Then these leaders ask for a "short letter as to [our] opinion and thoughts." Here's a real short one — RESIGN!

Let's be absolutely clear: you don't have to approve of Brother Ray's actions to denounce the boss-inspired mass hysteria against him and be outraged that the cops treated him worse than they treat drug dealers who shoot children. We've got to demand that there be no railroad of Brother Ray!

You don't have to be a revolutionary socialist to do so — just an honest trade unionist with some guts. Instead of cowering before this orchestrated capitalist attack, an honest unionist would openly, publicly and as massively as possible expose the real criminals, TA management; would demand that Brother Ray get his rights; and would denounce management cynicism and hypocrisy in seizing on this tragedy to turn transit workers against each other and other workers against us — the old game of divide and rule.

ROUGH WATERS AHEAD

The open glee with which MTA president Stangl and NYCTA president Kiepper greeted Bootlicker's gift of our rights against search and seizure is not just because of his assent to this management tool of harassment and intimidation, nor his silence about their plans for us to inform on each other; they know that for him to do this with our contract still hanging is like putting up a billboard reading, "Come on in, TA; this contract round we're giving away the store!"

With Bootlicker and his flunky majority on the executive board in charge and the membership so demoralized, management has a right to be gleeful. And if Bootlicker and his crew get re-elected in the local elections this fall, there may not be a union by the time of the next contract. Let's work to start saving our union:

**FIGHT THE RAILROADING OF BROTHER RAY!
STOP THE TA'S RAT-OUT DRIVE!
NO RANDOM DRUG TESTING!**

Eric Josephson
Shop Steward, Track Division

September 10, 1991
labor donated



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Unions

continued from page 32

and scab attacks. But that's not for the AFL-CIO leadership. Militant picket lines and mass solidarity would give us too much self-confidence and initiative.

In the face of the attacks, the heads of 17 million organized workers are trampling over each other to lead the retreat. Public employee union bureaucrats across the U.S. sacrifice tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of social services without a struggle. This is supposed to prevent even more layoffs and cutbacks, but abject surrender only encourages the bosses and their government to attack harder.

The reason for this idiocy is that the bureaucrats are bound to the capitalist system, materially and ideologically. Their positions and power depend on profits and budget surpluses, a little of which they hope to pass along to their members. But now, when the economic crisis means losses and deficits, they pass workers' previous gains back to the bosses. We may lose thousands of jobs, but the union leaders will keep their posts and wait for the return of "prosperity." Till then, they say, there's nothing unions can do. For them, a union is like a leaky umbrella — it works if there's no rain.

The bureaucrats tell workers that under these circumstances strikes are futile. Of course, under *their* leadership, this is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Nevertheless, efforts to keep workers from fighting back have not always succeeded. The Hormel, Greyhound, Eastern Airlines and New York Daily News strikes, like many others, were responses to union-busting efforts by the capitalists.

But even when they're forced to take action, the bureaucrats' role is to sabotage the struggle. They prevent mass picketing, avoid membership meetings and keep the members in the dark. They make sure strikes are isolated so that strikers will feel no solidarity with other workers. Other union leaders, even those "supporting" the strike, limit their aid to paltry financial contributions, occasional picket visits and silly symbolic acts like giving away rival papers during the Daily News strike. The bureaucrats not only strike to lose, they further demoralize us by making losing demands. At Eastern and the Daily News, for instance, they called not for rejecting the take-backs but only for lowering them.

Their preferred "struggle" is in the voting booth, in Democratic Party meetings, in the courts, in the Labor Boards. Their favorite pressure tactic is to send delegations of union officials and their drinking buddies to lobby federal and state legislatures. By leaning on governments at all levels, they try to keep their members passive, awaiting judges' verdicts, arbitrators' decisions, congress's votes or the next election. In general, the bureaucrats see themselves as co-partners in the state apparatus. Along with this goes the view that the state machinery at all levels is above classes, equally open to influence from capitalists and the workers.

THE INCREDIBLE CONTRADICTION

Many workers understand that the government and the two main parties only serve big business. Now the economic crisis highlights this reality for all. During the Daily News strike there was a crime wave terrorizing black and Latino areas in New York — but thousands of cops worked overtime to protect scabs and attack strikers, i.e., doing their real job.

A large part of federal, state and local deficits comes from money owed to wealthy buyers of government bonds —

banks, insurance firms and capitalists. Nobody in power talks about cutting *these* payments. The Republicans, Democrats and union leaders only debate *how much* workers and poor people will give back to guarantee the bosses' bonds.

Here is an incredible contradiction! The most powerful working class in the world is paralyzed by a union structure and leadership that exudes weakness and demoralizes workers. How can we overcome these obstacles and demonstrate our real power and potential to transform society?

It is clear that the U.S. working class must move in a new direction. The problems we face cannot be solved within a single company or industry. They require action locally, nationally, even internationally. They require confronting governments at all levels, so our direction must be political. The question is, what action should workers take?

LABOR PARTY ADVOCATES

The small left wing of the labor bureaucracy has long dreamed of pressuring Lane Kirkland & Co. to lead some resistance against the bosses' attacks, lest the unions lose their last shreds of authority among workers. But like their right-wing colleagues, they have no desire to appeal to the union ranks. Some are beginning to argue for organizing a labor party as a way out of the impasse. But this position does not mean a break with electoralism. It provides a radical-sounding cover for the same disastrous class collaborationism that has always betrayed workers' interests.

The most prominent labor party spokesman is Tony Mazzocchi, an official of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union (OCAW). Until recently he wrote articles and spoke at occasional conferences on the subject but never took any organizational steps. But last spring he and others formed an outfit called Labor Party Advocates (LPA). Mazzocchi says he "hesitated actually to undertake organizing such an effort until it was absolutely clear that we had no alternative. *Today it is clear. We have no alternative.*"

In the 1990 Congressional election, only 35 percent of the electorate bothered to go to the polls. The rest of us stayed home — voting, in effect, for None of the Above. Enough is enough. The bosses have two parties. Working people should have at least one. It is time for the labor movement to organize its own independent party of working people.

Polls show, says Mazzocchi, that about 50% of union members favor a labor party and understand that the Democrats and Republicans serve the bosses' interests. Nevertheless, Mazzocchi's call for LPA states that the group "will neither run nor endorse candidates for political office. It will not interfere with on-going COPE work or other electoral activity. But it will agitate for a new economic, social and political agenda for working people. And it will serve as an organizing committee for a new Labor Party."

The sentence about a new agenda is deceptive. LPA has a limited reformist, nationalist platform, but Mazzocchi and his allies insist that LPA must have no statements or discussions about program — only about the mechanics of recruitment. The idea is that when they've reached a membership of 100,000, with a kernel of 1000 union leaders, they'll hold a founding convention where they'll discuss what program they're recruiting people for. Convention delegates would be limited to union officials, from shop stewards on up.

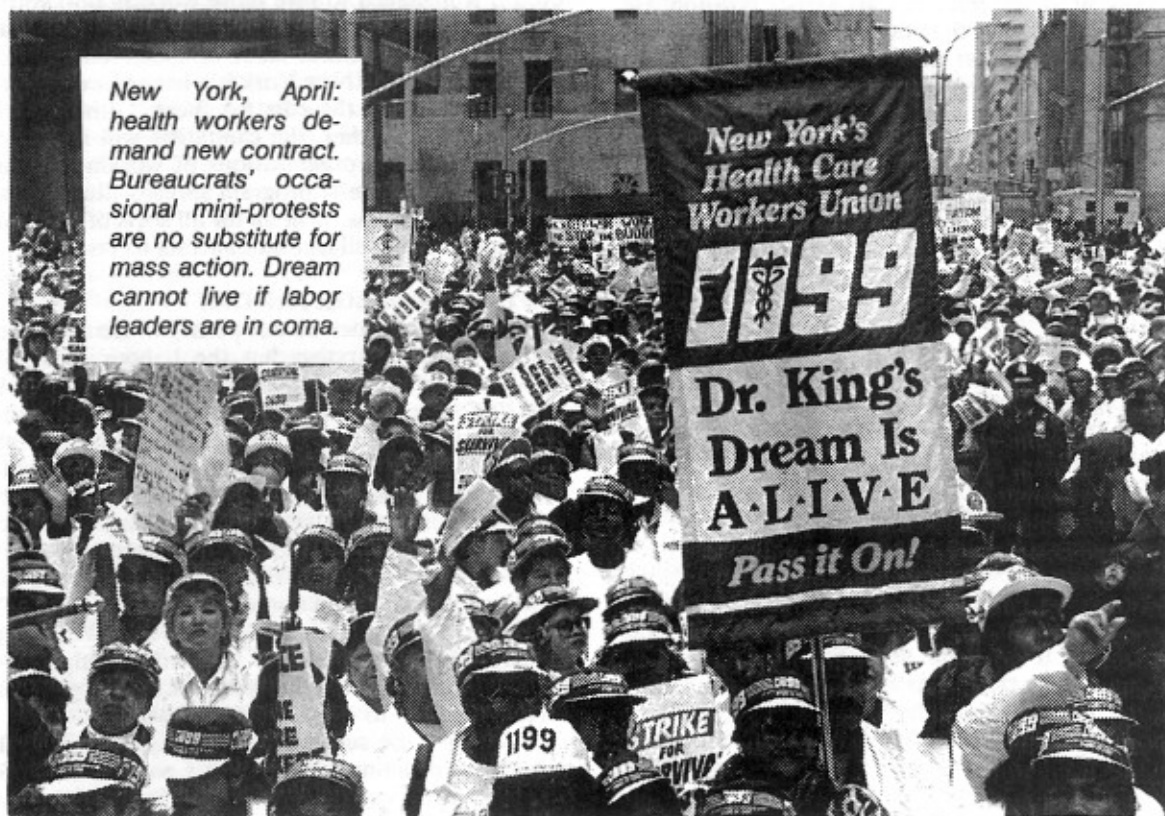
The key to LPA is its refusal to run candidates. It aims at *gently* pressuring the union bureaucracy to give up on the Democrats. It states that it will eventually go ahead and form a labor party without first winning the support of officialdom. But the real plan is to keep the organizing effort as unthreat-

ening to the bureaucrats as possible: no programmatic discussion where radicals and socialists can advance a platform; no interference with union support to Democrats; no possibility for rank-and-filers to play any role; indeed, no real activities of any kind. The LPA serves only as a vehicle to stall workers' desires to organize against the Democrats.

Other bureaucrats toy with running union members for office outside the Democratic Party, but only as a pressure tactic. In New Jersey, for example, where Democratic Governor Florio carried out big layoffs, benefit cuts and wage freezes for state workers, the Communications Workers (CWA), the largest state workers' union, held demonstrations and took a strike vote against Florio's plan but never organized for a strike. They devoted some effort to running their

Mazzocchi's refusal to let them organize an LPA chapter in New York. It also objects to LPA's stance against running opposition candidates against the Democrats and Republicans, failing to understand that non-confrontation with labor's officialdom is LPA's defining condition.

Socialist Action calls LPA a "positive development" and urges workers to join. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency does the same, priding itself on its "nonsectarian response" despite LPA's concessions to Democratic politicians. *Socialist Organizer* also considers LPA "an important step forward," and adds helpfully, "For this organization to really get off the ground, local chapters will have to be formed and public activities organized The ranks of labor will have to be . . . involved in the discussion of how best to move forward."



New York, April:
health workers demand new contract.
Bureaucrats' occasional mini-protests are no substitute for mass action. Dream cannot live if labor leaders are in coma.

own members against Democrats in state legislature races in a half-baked campaign. Florio agreed to reduce his cuts a little, and the CWA's campaign vanished.

Mazzocchi's own OCAW endorsed Labor Party Advocates at its convention in August, at the same time that it urged Texas populist Jim Hightower to run for the Democratic presidential nomination. For the bureaucracy a labor party is at best a B-Team for times when the A-Team, the Democrats, abandons its pretense of serving working people.

THE LEFT AND THE LPA

The people doing most of the footwork and campaigning for a labor party are not union bureaucrats themselves but members of left-wing organizations. A whole wing of left groups, mainly those that call themselves Trotskyists, has climbed aboard the Mazzocchi team, covering themselves with left-sounding programmatic demands.

Thus the *Labor Militant* group's Campaign for a Labor Party works to sign up LPA members, mildly protesting

But this is precisely what the LPA leaders reject.

The rank-and-filist *Labor Notes*, supported by the Solidarity Socialist Organization, serves as mostly uncritical flacks for LPA and offers this advice: "There is also the problem of what to do about the unemployed and spouses who work in the home. . . . The inclusion of these groups would help increase the proportion of women and minority working class people in LPA." Of course, but the real problem is that a strategy based on appealing to labor bureaucrats is *bound* to exclude the most oppressed workers.

A surprising exception is the Socialist Workers Party, which asserts that LPA "does not mark a step forward toward independent working-class political action." (*Militant*, Oct. 11.) The SWP's chief reason is the fact that the impetus for LPA does not come from workers' struggles but rather from "the continuing blows being dealt to the unions and to their officialdoms by the employers and their government." But since the SWP favors building a labor party today, this

excuse is insufficient. If bureaucrats try to build a party that, whatever its faults, can help defend the unions, any class-conscious worker must support it critically. The real problem — that the working class today needs mass action, not more electoralism — is not one that the SWP would notice.

TROTSKY'S REAL STRATEGY

The pseudo-Trotskyists backing the LPA believe they are carrying out the strategy devised in the late 1930's by the great revolutionary, Leon Trotsky. Indeed, Trotsky advocated a labor party for the United States, but his approach was entirely different. He urged a labor party campaign because he believed that *at that time* it would advance the development of *revolutionary* consciousness among workers.

Trotsky's support for a labor party was tactical, not permanent. He had opposed working for a labor party in the early 1930's, and he never retracted his earlier position. He wrote: "I will never assume the responsibility to affirm abstractly and dogmatically that the creation of a labor party would be a 'progressive step' even in the United States, because I do not know under what circumstances, under what guidance, and for what purposes that party would be created." Because the U.S. labor bureaucracy was "more reactionary and corrupted than it was at the height of the British empire," under American conditions a labor party would likely be "not a progressive step but a hindrance to the progressive evolution of the working class."

The difference in the late 1930's was that by then U.S. workers were mobilized in an economic struggle and needed to make a sharp turn to political independence. In a few years the working class had fought general strikes in several cities, occupied factories, waged pitched battles with cops, goons and scabs — and brought millions into the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), then one of the mightiest union federations in the world. It had organized much of the steel, auto, rubber and other viciously anti-union industries. But it faced the "Roosevelt Depression" of 1937-39, which meant that a purely economic struggle was a dead end.

Trotsky saw specific objective conditions driving millions of fighting workers to see the need for an independent working-class political party. Thus he wrote in 1938, "If the class struggle is not to be crushed, replaced by demoralization, then the movement must find a new channel and this channel is political. That is the *fundamental argument* in favor of [the labor party] slogan." He added:

Now we have a movement of tremendous importance — the CIO; some 3,000,000 or more are organized in a new, more militant organization. This organization which began with . . . big strikes . . . at the first step of its activity runs into the biggest crisis in the U.S. *The perspective for economic strikes is, for the next period, excluded, given the . . . growing unemployed ranks, etc. We can look for the possibility that it will put all its weight in the political balance.*

Trotsky's followers in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) knew that only a *revolutionary* workers' party could be politically independent of capitalism. But they wished to join with all workers who wanted their own party but still had illusions that capitalism could be reformed. So they campaigned openly for a labor party that would have a transitional program leading to socialist revolution. In Trotsky's words,

I will not say that the labor party is a revolutionary party, but that we will do everything to make it possible. At every meeting I will say: I am a representative of the SWP. I consider it the only revolutionary party. But I am not a sectarian. You are trying now to create a big

workers' party. I will help you but I propose that you consider a program for this party. I make such and such propositions. . . . *Under these conditions it would be a big step forward. Why not say openly what is?*

Why not indeed? But this is not the method of the left groups who call for a labor party today. Instead of addressing the union ranks to expose and oust the bureaucrats, instead of fighting for a revolutionary strategy and a revolutionary party, they offer themselves as consultants to the left wing of the bureaucracy with friendly advice and few criticisms.

The real meaning of the left labor party advocates' strategy is to form a reformist labor party. A U.S. labor party, if built by the union bureaucracy as an alternative to a mass working-class movement, would have the same policies as the AFL-CIO leaders: racism, imperialism and class collaboration. It would be no better than the Democrats, even if it managed to lure more workers into voting for it.

When the capitalists can't fool the workers any more, they allow their faithful labor or social-democratic servants (Mayor Dinkins of New York is a leading example) to do the fooling and make the cuts for them. Ultimately, when the crisis deepens further, the capitalists will have to crush all unions and other organizations of working and oppressed people. The reformist program spreads illusions among the workers and softens them up for all sorts of demagogues and charlatans, from sell-out bureaucrats to fascists.

REFORMIST LABOR PARTIES

The left laborites do not point out that their real model is not Trotsky's strategy but the Labour Party of Britain. How can they? Labour's betrayal of the miners' strike in the mid-1980's, its Thatcherist "free market" program, its support for imperialism, all show that it is based on the interests of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, not the mass of workers.

Another unnamed model is the world's first Labor Party, the Australian, now 100 years old. The ALP seems even worse than the British because it has actually been in office for most of the '80's and '90's, implementing vicious economic and police attacks on unions and workers. From the beginning, one of the ALP's major policies was "White Australia." Its practice remains racist and anti-immigrant, but the organization of growing numbers of non-Anglo workers has forced the ALP to mask itself somewhat.

Whether the self-avowed Trotskyists in LPA like it or not, they are calling for just such a party in the U.S. To say, as Mazzocchi does, "that the United States should not be the only industrialized nation without an independent party of working people" is to claim the existing racist and imperialist labor parties as examples for U.S. workers.

The truly corrupt spirit of left labor partyism is expressed by *Labor Militant*, which deliberately confuses Trotsky's fight for a revolutionary party with its own reformist labor party campaign:

A particular feature of the U.S. working class is that it is the only working class in the advanced industrial capitalist world without its own mass political organization. Trotsky explained that the party is the memory of the class. It keeps alive the traditions, the memories of fights fought and battles won, of who is the enemy and the treachery of the enemy. It reminds the working class that there is an alternative to capitalism. Reformist mass parties of the working class, such as the social-democratic parties of Western Europe and Canada, are defective memories. (*Facing the Challenge of the '90s*, pamphlet, July 1990.)

Of course Trotsky explained that "the party is the memory of the class" — *the revolutionary party!* The reformist

parties that *smash* strikes, enslave the colonies and therefore embody the "treachery of the enemy," represent no alternative to capitalism! The reformists' problem is hardly "defective memories." They are on the other side of the class line.

Some left labor party advocates justify their efforts to build a pro-capitalist party by blaming the supposed mood of the masses. The Workers Socialist League admits that a labor party program today "is not likely to be a revolutionary socialist one but rather a social-democratic and reformist program initially, because this would most likely amount to the lowest common denominator among the forces involved and would likely reflect the extent of their political consciousness." (*Workers Review*, Winter 1991.)

No, reformism reflects the interests of the labor bureaucracy. Joining the LPA's campaign means accepting the continued grip of the union bureaucracy on the working class (and blaming the workers for this condition in order to accept it is a common centrist evasion of responsibility). Instead of counterposing a revolutionary program to the bureaucracy's reformism, leftists help the latter dress themselves in an up-to-date style that will regain the support of workers disgusted by the Democrat's betrayals.

What unites the leftists advocating a labor party is the idea that *any* break with the Democrats would be a step forward. So it would — *if* it were taken by workers to advance their struggle, even if they retained all sorts of reformist notions. Revolutionaries would have to confront these illusions and help break workers from their bureaucratic leaders. But the left labor party advocates are hoping for a move by the bureaucrats, so they call for the most minimal break imaginable in order not to frighten the reformists. Their electoralism is the opposite of the revolutionary method.

TURN THE TIDE — GENERAL STRIKE!

The only way to fight back is to mobilize and break out of the passivity the union bureaucrats and their allies impose on us. Of course working people have to participate in every struggle no matter how small or partial, but we are not facing small or partial attacks. The attacks are across the board. The capitalists have gone beyond salami tactics, cutting us off one union or sector at a time. With infuriating cockiness they marshal every boss, every level of government, every police agency against us. And none of our misleaders even hints that we could regroup and stop giving back.

We can and must. The solution is mass action. And the tactic that will start this process is the *general strike* — a necessary defensive weapon for the working class today. Nothing less can fend off the capitalist onslaught.

As public workers are particular targets now, they have particular incentive to lead a general strike. With the virtual lockouts of state employees by the governors of Maine, Connecticut and elsewhere to wring wage cuts and tax increases out of the workers, the question naturally arises: if the bosses can do it to save the capitalists' bond payments, why can't the workers do it to save our jobs and incomes?

Although it begins as a defensive move, a general strike has the potential to make the working class into a political challenger for state power. It directly paralyzes the government apparatus and sets up the workers' own alternative production, transport and communication networks. This has been the theme of many general strikes. Recent examples are the Polish workers' Interfactory Strike Committees in 1980 (before they degenerated into the reformist Solidarity union movement) and the Soviet coal miners' takeover of their communities in their 1989 and 1991 strikes.

A general strike will come in an outburst of indignation

against the attacks. But it will also prove to the working class how powerful it really is. At the start, the capitalists and their government would be helpless; workers would have the initiative. The question of who is to rule society would instantly be posed. Communists do not hide the revolutionary implications of a general strike. Workers who now reject socialism because they think it impossible would understand the world differently once they saw their united strength.

OUR NUCLEAR WEAPON

In 1980, then-Mayor Koch of New York uttered possibly the only true words he ever said when he called the general strike a "nuclear weapon" too devastating ever to be used.

In 1981, Lane Kirkland, urged to defend PATCO, said, "I have never gotten as much mail on an issue. . . . About 90% are pro-controllers and about 50% of those denounce me for not calling a general strike." He refused, and PATCO was smashed. In 1985, Kirkland was asked at a press conference if the workers were forever doomed to voting for the Democrats. He replied, "What do you propose? A general strike? Hello, Mr. Trotsky."

Well, that *is* the alternative. The time is coming when workers will listen more to the Trotskyists who fight for their interests than to the Kirklands who defend their bosses.

The LRP has long advocated the general strike as *the* way to start defending ourselves. At the Daily News strike and at other mass labor demonstrations in New York, we distributed leaflets and placards calling for a general strike. The response from our fellow workers was very favorable.

Today more union bureaucrats feel the heat — from the anger of the ranks below and the intransigence of the bosses above. Last fall, President Dennis Rivera of Local 1199 (hospital and health care workers in New York City) made noises about a one-day general strike. At an emergency delegate assembly, he was pushed to come out into the open. An LRP supporter raised a motion demanding that Rivera publicly call on the labor leaders of New York to organize a one-day general strike. The motion was passed overwhelmingly by the approximately seven hundred delegates present.

Rivera's strike talk has been little but hot air. He complained that he met resistance from other labor leaders on any question of united action. But it's much easier for union leaders to pass the buck when it's all behind closed doors. Out in public — in front of the workers — is where the fight for a general strike and against the do-nothing bureaucracy must be waged. And that's the difference between real revolutionaries and pro-reformist labor party advocates.

The reason the LRP fights for mass action through a general strike, not more electoral babble through outfits like Labor Party Advocates, is that our task is to build a *revolutionary*, not a reformist, party. This is no sectarian goal. It means joining in *all* struggles of workers and the oppressed to explain clearly and openly the need for socialist revolution. Workers can't hope to stay at their present standard of living under capitalism — in this epoch of crisis, the only capitalist path is down. Only proletarian communism can defend and advance workers' conditions.

Building the revolutionary party does not rule out fighting for even tiny reforms; on the contrary, it demands it. The working class will learn revolutionary lessons only through struggle. But its advanced layers have to see the reality long in advance and clearly enough to internalize and act on it. For this, revolutionaries have to shine a floodlight through the smog produced by pro-capitalist polluters on all sides. The hallmark of revolutionaries is their unrelenting fight against all misleaders of the working class. ■

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Fall 1991

Revolutionary Strategy as Unions Putrify:

General Strike or Labor Party?

It's been a tough decade for U.S. workers. In 1981 half a million marched on Solidarity Day in response to the anti-worker attacks by the Reagan Administration. This mobilization showed many the enormous power of the working class. Perhaps this would start a turnaround by the unions, a revival of the moribund labor movement.

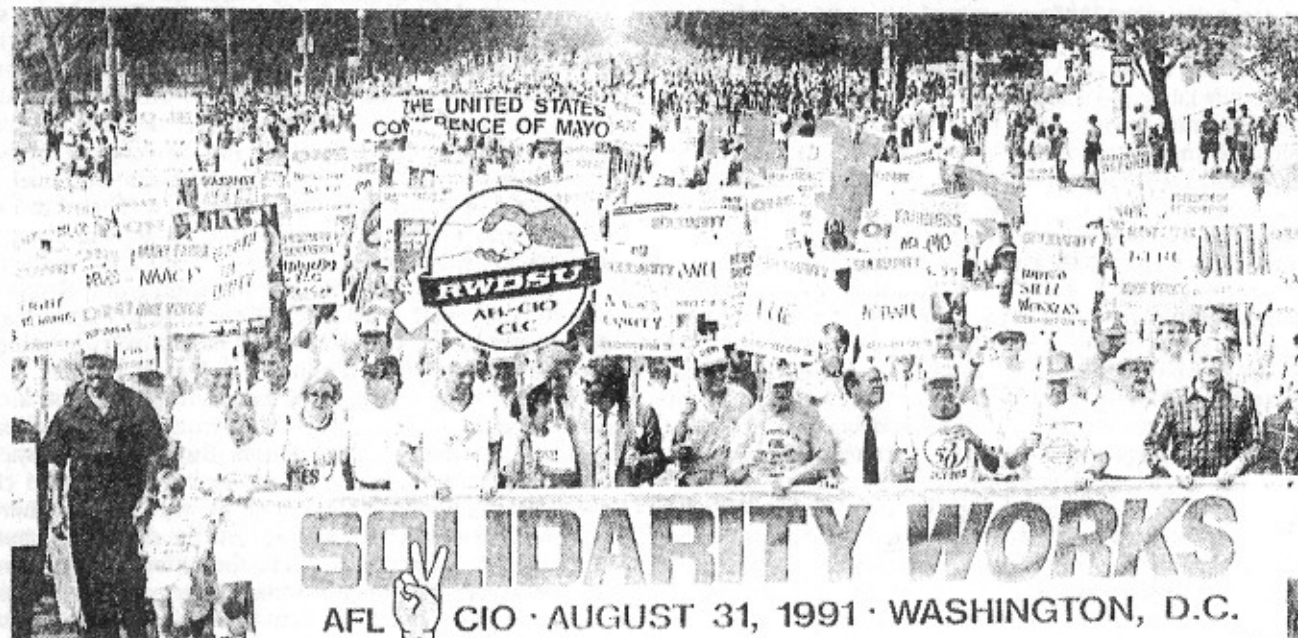
Ten years later such dreams lie shattered. To those who thought concessions and givebacks were only temporary setbacks, reality has taught a harsh lesson. Despite the pseudo-prosperity of the '80's, its skyrocketing Wall Street indexes and scandals, the attacks on working people continued. Glittering wealth contrasted with deepening poverty. The union

replace striking workers. Welcome to the New World Order.

Operation Screw the Workers could not succeed without the help of the Democrats. Having lost the last three elections by pandering to the demands of big business, they again scramble to mimic the Republican's conservative strategy.

SECOND-RATE SOLIDARITY

A nationwide show of class solidarity is greatly needed. Sensing this mood, the AFL-CIO held another national demonstration in Washington this September, billed as Solidarity Day II. Some 250,000 workers turned out to march to the capitol building, including the United Mine Workers' con-



officials allowed Reagan to crush the air traffic controllers' union, PATCO, the bosses turned on the rest of us.

The attack continues into the new decade. Fresh on the heels of its slaughter of Iraqi soldiers and civilians, the Bush administration is ready to crash down even harder on workers here and abroad. While Bush and the Democrats in Congress bail out the S&L crooks, while the government spends billions to pay off failing banks, workers get only the finger. We get higher taxes, while cutbacks by federal, state and local governments mean fewer services and huge layoffs. With the aid of subservient courts, corporations use bankruptcy laws to rob workers of their pensions. Unions face more union-busting and concession demands.

The bosses' politicians attack working people's democratic rights too. Bush spits on women's need for safe, affordable abortions. He weakens an already pathetic civil rights bill and cynically nominates a mediocre reactionary, Clarence Thomas, to the Supreme Court. The only rights Bush defends are the capitalists' — the "right" to hire permanent scabs to

tingent wearing battle fatigues and carrying sturdy sticks — which could come in handy on a picket line. Many fewer stayed to hear the tired speeches from union bureaucrats and Democratic Party politicians at the Capitol.

The primary official demands of the rally were for outlawing the hiring of permanent scabs and for improved health insurance. But the bureaucracy's real goal was to show the politicians that unions still exist — so don't forget us, please, boss! From the AFL-CIO tops' point of view, Solidarity Day II was a parade of voting cattle, since they certainly don't want us to do anything active like strike. The UAW contingent, for example, was organized as a collective advisor to the Democrats to start sounding better: their placards read, "We don't need another GOP!"

The real way to fight "replacement workers" is not to let scabs, permanent or otherwise, onto the job in the first place. That's what miners or other workers can do with mass picket lines ready for self-defense — knowing that we face police

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